

AD-A187 042

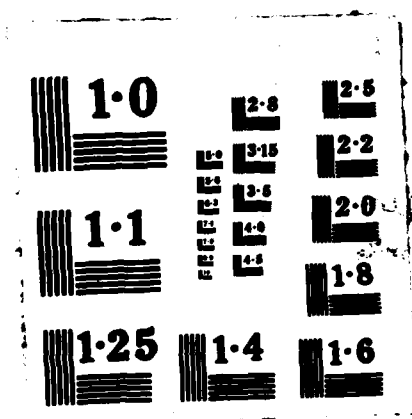
MILITARY ETHICS: REFLECTIONS ON PRINCIPLES - THE  
PROFESSION OF ARMS MILIT. (U) NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIV  
WASHINGTON DC M M MARIN ET AL. SEP 87

1/3

UNCLASSIFIED

F/G 3/9

NL



DTIC FILE COPY

2

AD-A187 042

This document has been approved  
for public release and sale; its  
distribution is unlimited.

DEC 1 8 1967

Stock #008-020-01116-9

Price: \$6.00



**MILITARY  
ETHICS**

2

# MILITARY ETHICS

*Reflections on principles—the profession of arms,  
military leadership, ethical practices, war and  
morality, educating the citizen-soldier.*

DTIC  
ELECTE  
DEC 18 1987  
S D  
A

1987

NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
WASHINGTON, DC



This document has been approved  
for public release and sale; its  
distribution is unlimited.

**National Defense University Press Publications.** To increase general knowledge and inform discussion, NDU Press publishes books on subjects relating to US national security. Each year, in this effort, The National Defense University, through the Institute for National Strategic Studies, hosts about two dozen Senior Fellows who engage in original research on national security issues. NDU Press publishes the best of this research. In addition, the Press publishes especially timely or distinguished writing on national security from authors outside the University, new editions of out-of-print defense classics, and books based on conferences concerning national security affairs.

Some of the material in this publication is protected by copyright. Permission to reproduce copyrighted material contained in this publication should be obtained directly from the copyright owner.

Opinions, conclusions, and recommendations expressed or implied within are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the National Defense University, the Department of Defense, or any other Government agency.

Proofread by William Mizelle, Editmasters/Mizelle, Washington, DC, under contract DAHC32-87-A-0014.

---

NDU Press publications are sold by the US Government Printing Office. For ordering information, call (202) 783-3238, or write to: Superintendent of Documents, US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

---

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Military ethics.

"Collection . . . assembled through the efforts of Colonel Malham Wakin, Colonel Kenneth Wenker, and Captain James Kempf"—P.

I. Military ethics. I. Wakin, Malham M. II. Wenker, Kenneth H. III. Kempf, James.

U22.M4853 1987 172'.42 82-16778

First printing: September 1987



Stock #008-020-01116-9  
Price: \$6.00

GPO-

Dist

A1 24

## CONTENTS:

<i>Foreword</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Publisher's Preface</i>	<i>xiii</i>
PART I. → THE PROFESSION OF ARMS --	
→ PROFESSIONALS OR HIRED GUNS? LOYALTIES ARE THE DIFFERENCE;	5
<i>Manuel M. Davenport</i>	
→ A CODE OF ETHICS FOR OFFICERS;	13
<i>Richard T. DeGeorge</i>	
II. → MILITARY LEADERSHIP --	
→ MACHIAVELLI, MANAGEMENT, AND MORAL LEADERSHIP;	33
<i>James B. Stockdale</i>	
→ ETHICAL ASPECTS OF THE EXERCISE OF COMMAND;	45
<i>Roger L. Shinn</i>	
→ ETHICS AND THE MILITARY ORGANIZATION;	61
<i>Manuel M. Davenport</i>	
	<i>vii</i>

- ▷ MORALITY AND THE  
MILITARY PROFESSION:  
PROBLEMS AND  
SOLUTIONS; 81

*Charles W. Hudlin*

PART III. ETHICAL PRACTICES -

- LEGITIMATE AVENUES OF  
MILITARY PROTEST IN A  
DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY; 101

*Richard A. Gabriel*

- WAITING FOR EURIPIDES; 119

*Alfred Kern*

- WHY DON'T WE FOLLOW  
THE RULES?; 125

*Philip A. Johnson*

- THE ETHICS OF THE  
ELECTRONIC REVOLUTION:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE US  
AIR FORCE 139

*William J. Wallisch*

IV. ▷ WAR AND MORALITY -

- NUCLEAR DETERRENCE -  
ITS MORAL AND  
POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS; 157

*Noel Gayler*

	→	<u>MORALITY IN TARGETING OBJECTS OF MILITARY VALUE: A RESPONSE</u>	171
		<i>Paul R. Viotti</i>	
	→	<u>MILITARY NECESSITY AND MORALITY</u>	177
		<i>Kenneth H. Wenker</i>	
	→	<u>WAR GAMES</u>	185
		<i>Joseph V. Potter</i>	
	→	<u>ON MACHIAVELLI AND VIETNAM</u>	193
		<i>William E. McCarron</i>	
PART V.	→	EDUCATING THE CITIZEN-SOLDIER	
	→	<u>LITERARY PERCEPTION OF THE AMERICAN MILITARY</u>	203
		<i>Alfred Kern</i>	
	→	<u>HUMANITIES AT THE HANOI HILTON</u>	215
		<i>Alfred Kern</i>	
	→	<u>EDUCATION FOR LEADERSHIP AND SURVIVAL: THE ROLE OF THE PRESSURE COOKER</u>	223
		<i>James B. Stockdale</i>	

## FOREWORD

**A**LL of us respond in varying ways to the beliefs and values of our families, our communities, and our nation. Members of the military services, however, must do more than respond to our commonly held beliefs—they must be ready to risk their lives defending them. As a consequence, military men and women are never far removed from the central issues of ethics and morality.

Unlike most philosophical speculations, ethics is the stuff of real life, embodying justifications for personal and societal acts, revealing deepest-held principles through conduct. As the essays in this book attest, when we question personal, community, or national ethics, we are responding to a venerable and enduring part of human nature that compels us to take the measure of our principles and to make distinctions between right and wrong.

This collection demonstrates by its variety and range the complexity of personal, community, and national mores that come to bear upon the performance of military duties. Without such constant reexamination of ethical principles, our national defense could risk answering military threats only in terms of convenience, gain, or simple expedience. The National Defense University is happy to contribute these essays to that continuing examination of ethical issues which is so crucial to military life.



*Bradley C. Hosmer*  
*Lieutenant General, US Air Force*  
*President, National Defense University*

## PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

**T**HESE ESSAYS examine a wide range of ethical issues facing our military professionals, without emphasizing certain issues or avoiding others because of their sensitivity or difficulty. The collection focuses on ethical standards and the reconciliation of standards with personal internal conflicts.

Many of these articles first appeared in the *Journal of Professional Military Ethics*, sponsored by the United States Air Force Academy. Several were originally presented at the Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics, a conference hosted annually by the National Defense University in Washington, DC. One, by Admiral James B. Stockdale, was first delivered as an Andrew R. Cecil distinguished lecture at the University of Texas at Dallas.

The collection was assembled through the efforts of Colonel Malham Wakin, Colonel Kenneth Wenker, and Captain James Kempf. Colonel Wakin is Permanent Professor and Head of the Department of Philosophy and Fine Arts of the United States Air Force Academy; Colonel Wenker and Captain Kempf were the first Editor and Managing Editor of the Academy's *Journal of Professional Military Ethics*.



**MILITARY  
ETHICS**

*Part I*

# THE PROFESSION OF ARMS



*Manuel M. Davenport*

## PROFESSIONALS OR HIRED GUNS? LOYALTIES ARE THE DIFFERENCE

**I**N THE CONTEMPORARY literature of professional ethics, two different ways of determining whether an occupation is a profession are commonly used. First, the historical approach simply asks, "Has this occupation been recognized in the history of civilization to be a profession?" The second or analytic approach asks, "Does this occupation meet the currently accepted standards of a profession?" These standards state:

The work done by members of this occupation is recognized by the public to be crucial and necessary.

In order to enter this occupation certain specified minimal requirements must be met.

---

Manuel M. Davenport is a professor of philosophy at Texas A&M University. He was the distinguished visiting professor of philosophy at the US Air Force Academy for the 1980-81 academic year. This article, reprinted from the US Air Force Academy *Journal of Professional Military Ethics*, September 1981, was originally published in *Army Magazine*, May 1980. Copyright 1980 by the Association of the United States Army. Reproduced by permission.

Members of this occupation state and enforce a code of ethical responsibilities.

Regardless of which of these two approaches is used it is clear that military service is a profession. Along with medicine, law and the priesthood it has been recognized since at least the eighth century in Western civilization, and since 2500 B.C. in Asia, as a special calling.

Today, if we use the analytic approach, the work of the military is recognized by the public as crucial and necessary; to enter military service requires special training and qualifications, and ethical responsibilities are stated in the various codes of military justice and enforced by various types of courts-martial.

Members of all professions — whether physicians, teachers, engineers or members of the armed forces — share certain common ethical responsibilities or duties. Their paramount duty is to promote the safety and welfare of the general public, which in today's shrinking world means the safety and welfare of the human species. Next, they are obligated to use all their skills and knowledge to serve their clients and, finally, at the lowest level of priority they are obligated to act to promote the dignity and status of their profession.

Each profession, however, has its own peculiar ethical responsibilities which arise from the peculiar relationship between professional and client because of the nature of service rendered and requested. In teaching, for example, the professional is required to make frequent and public assessments of the client's intellectual progress and, thus, the teacher must be impartial in grading and discourage cheating by the student in test situations.

In medicine, the physician must decide whether to let a terminally ill client die now or later. Teachers, except by a very bad analogy, do not have to make such decisions and, fortunately, physicians do not have to adjust their treatment according to their patient's ability to solve quadratic equations.

The point is that in each profession special ethical problems must be faced because in each the client-professional relationship varies according to the unique kind of service the client seeks and the professional is qualified to provide.

In order to consider what special ethical responsibilities arise in the military profession, we must ask first, "Who is the client?" In most professions, the professional can clearly distinguish between his clients and the public or humanity at large because in most callings the clients are a selected subset of the public or humanity.

Patients seek out physicians, who may refuse to treat them. Students, in most cases, must meet prerequisites in order to work with particular teachers. But if you are in the military profession it is quite difficult to distinguish your clients from humanity at large or the public in general.

The laws of war do make it clear, however, that the military professional must distinguish between his clients and humanity.

Such laws have consistently held that crimes against humanity are not justified simply because the offender is acting under the orders of a military superior and this principle, following the Nuremberg trials of 1945, has become firmly entrenched in the military law of the United States.

The paramount duty then of the military professional is to promote the safety and welfare of

*humanity* and this duty, according to military law, takes precedence over duties to clients, who as his fellow citizens are but a particular portion of the human race.

Having distinguished the clients from humanity at large, it must be admitted that the military profession is still peculiar in that its members serve an unusually large clientele. But it is not the *magnitude* that deserves consideration—after all, political officials can and do serve millions of clients on a regular basis—rather it is the *remoteness* from clients that warrants attention.

Political officials can, and do, make personal contact with their clients, but such personal contact is generally avoided and held to be unnecessary by both military professionals and their clients.

This remoteness between the warrior and civilian—like the remoteness between a policeman and law-abiding citizen—arises from the fact that in both cases service to client is rendered best in the absence of the client. Civilians and citizens do not want wars waged or criminals pursued in their front yards. If such dangerous proximity is necessary, then the professionals have already failed.

This fact, that clients of those who engage in violence seek distance from the professionals they hire, explains, I believe, two common phenomena in military life.

When I was stationed at Ft. Bliss, Tex., in 1950, I noticed that many shops posted signs reading, "Dogs and soldiers not welcome!" This puzzled me so much, that years later I recalled and related my reaction to Gen. Harold K. Johnson, then chief of staff.

His comment was, "Son, they don't want us at all

unless there is a war and then they don't want us at home."

Not only does the peculiar nature of the client-professional relationship in military service cause civilians to resist close association with military personnel, but it also draws members of the military profession closer together.

I did not serve long in the Army, but I have never experienced before or since such a bonding, such a willingness to ignore traits that in civilian life would have been intolerable, such a feeling that in some sense every man in my unit was, with me, part of the same primitive organism.

As J. Glenn Gray points out in his classic work, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle*, this feeling of unity, of fellowship, increases in combat situations:

[this fellowship] . . . at first develops through the consciousness of an obstacle to be overcome by common effort. . . . We feel earnest and happy at such moments because we are liberated from our individual impotence and are drunk with the power that union with our fellow brings . . . [but] there is something more and equally important . . . I believe it is nothing less than the assurance of immortality that makes possible . . . the fighter's impulse to sacrifice himself for a comrade, [which is] . . . an intrinsic element in the association of organized men in pursuit of a dangerous and difficult goal.

As Mr. Gray makes most clear, members of the military profession are pushed and drawn into a fellowship because in serving their clients they are the custodians of legalized violence. The citizens in sanctioning and assigning such power to the military are both relieved and fearful—relieved because now they can exercise power without great personal risk, but

fearful because they are uncertain the power will be relinquished upon demand.

This fear is not without basis. It is the duty of any professional to promote the dignity and status of his profession, and the military profession does not possess maximum dignity and status when military decisions are based on purely political considerations.

Moreover, as we have seen, the military profession is bound by a sense of fellowship that is almost inherently anti-civilian, a sense of fellowship that has an additive effect upon the normally intoxicating influences of possessing the ultimate powers of destruction.

Yet, duty to client must take priority over duty to the profession, and in this nation we recognize this by the principle of civilian control of the military.

According to his memoirs, President Harry Truman believed that Gen. Douglas MacArthur was a superior strategist and the best possible architect of a new Japan. But he also believed the principle of civilian control of the military was more important in the long run than the future of Japan, MacArthur or even Truman.

It is a principle necessary to the preservation of democracy; this we all acknowledge. But it is also a principle necessary to the preservation of professionalism itself. When members of any profession place a higher value upon the good of the profession than the good of their clients, their profession declines in proficiency and competence.

When professionals, whether physicians or military officers, care more about their prestige and status than the interests of those they serve, mistakes are buried, incompetents are protected, and criminal behavior is covered up. And this is even more likely to



happen among those professionals who constitute a fellowship of violence because they are feared and misunderstood, even when most professional.

I have attempted thus far to draw attention to two ethical problems which I believe weigh uniquely upon the military profession, and do so because the military profession is unique in being charged with the exercise of ultimate violence on behalf of a client nation that tolerates its existence only as a necessary evil.

As a result, the military profession is tempted to exercise the power granted by its clients without limit or restriction and plead that this is necessary in order to serve the best interests of its clients. The fellowship of violence does "liberate from individual impotence" and make "drunk with power," but the military professional's highest duty, which is to serve the good of humanity, requires the exercise of individual knowledge and freedom of choice.

It is all too easy as a member of the military profession to set aside such individual responsibilities. All too often, as Glenn Gray noted, it is easy to say, "When I raised my right hand and took that oath, I freed myself of the consequences of what I do." To commit deeds of violence without the usual consequences that society visits upon the violent seems, Gray writes, "at first a bit unnatural but for many not unpleasant. All too quickly it could become a habit."

But, as Gray also points out, such a habit will either destroy one's conscience completely, and thus one's ability to act as a responsible individual, or it will lead to contempt for self and all others.

The military professional is tempted also—and this I believe is the stronger temptation—to resist the direction of civilian clients, withdraw tightly into the

circle of professional fellowship and make its preservation and perpetuation his only purpose. To do so would destroy in time his clients and their values. But first and more quickly it would destroy the pride in being professional, the *esprit de corps*, that makes the difference between being a professional and a hired gun.

To be a professional is above all to possess a sense of calling. What calls one person to be a physician, another to be a teacher and yet another to be a military officer is a mystery to be unraveled only in pursuit of the calling. As a teacher, I believe there is something in the nature of reality itself that seeks to be revealed by the exercise of human reason, and as I have pursued this profession this belief has been verified.

The universe opens itself to our rational probings and as it does it reveals to us hidden depths in our own human natures. Through teaching, I am able to bring myself and others into an increasingly closer harmony with reality—we become more and more at home in our world.

The same is true, I believe, of the military profession. It may sound strange to those who have never belonged to the fellowship of violence or who protest that war must be abolished at all costs to hear that the nature of reality itself seeks to be revealed by the exercise of the military calling.

But Glenn Gray, who spent four years in combat during World War II, drew a similar conclusion: "It is recorded in the holy scriptures that there was once war in heaven . . . which must mean that the final secrets of war must be sought . . . in the nature of being itself."

*Richard T. DeGeorge*

## A CODE OF ETHICS FOR OFFICERS

**T**HE AMERICAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' PASTORAL on nuclear war, the film *The Day After*, and the popular discussion surrounding the deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles in Europe all clearly indicate that many people in the United States have concerns about the morality of war. They have yet to fully digest issues of morality in war raised by Viet Nam. And peace-keeping operations such as in Lebanon raise for them moral questions about the use of the military in peace, too.

These concerns are serious and legitimate both for Americans in general and for those in politics and in the armed forces themselves. Yet most Americans, already cynical about the government's concern for moral issues, would be amazed to find any official concern for and discussion of the morality of these issues within the military. But such ethical thinking *is* going on in the military. Moreover, it *should* go on at all levels of the military; such thinking should be

---

Professor Richard T. DeGeorge is with the Department of Philosophy of the University of Kansas. This article is reprinted from the US Air Force Academy *Journal of Professional Military Ethics*, February 1984.

promoted; and the general public should know it is taking place and know what's being discussed.

Developing an ethical code—initially for officers—is another way to address the concerns above. Whether we should develop an ethical code for officers does not hinge on whether the military is a profession. For although being a profession is one reason to develop an ethical code, it isn't the only reason. And independent of whether the military is a profession, a case can be made for developing such a code, providing it is a good one. Too often codes simply embody the moral intuitions of those producing them. More important than writing down moral intuitions or norms, however, are the moral arguments defending such intuitions or norms.

I shall speak of a code, but the purposes to be served by a code might be served as well by a series of white papers on the role of ethics in the military. Developing a code, or a series of white papers, can help develop ethical thought in the military; it can give legitimacy to raising moral issues by people in the military; and it can signal to the general public that the military does take ethics into consideration.

The mini-code I shall develop will not, of course, attempt to replace the UCMJ, though reflection on the former might lead to some revisions in the latter. Nor should any code of ethics for officers attempt to be a complete moral code, for the ordinary moral norms that apply to all people apply in the military as well.

By developing a code I shall show how a code might be constructed and so implicitly reply to those who say codes cannot be developed. I shall, moreover, emphasize those qualities necessary for a

military officer that are new or frequently overlooked. The resulting mini-code may not look typical, but will, I hope, throw light on aspects of military ethics that can be assimilated into a full code.

An ethical code for officers should tie into the proper function of officers. This function, which is the source of officers' unique moral responsibilities, should in turn tie into the more general mission of the armed forces. But this mission cannot simply be taken as given. For if the mission is to provide a starting point for the generation of moral norms, it must itself be morally justifiable. The first task, therefore, is to see if and to what extent the mission of the military is morally justifiable, and only then to use that mission as a guide to an ethical code for officers.

The military is frequently considered one way to implement a country's political policy in the international arena. The traditional view of the military is that its function is to wage war. That is seen as its mission as well.

The traditional view is only partially accurate. And at best it is morally justifiable only if the political policy it implements is morally justifiable. Aggressive wars have always been considered immoral. A primary task of the military today, moreover, is defense, not aggression. So the appropriate primary role of the military is to keep peace, as well as to wage war and to defend the country's legitimate interests and territorial integrity. These interests extend to the protection of friendly nations and in no way preclude alliances. But keeping the peace and fighting only defensive wars is the military's mission.

This thesis seems to be inherent in the very notion of deterrence. The military power of the United States stands ready to be used. Simply by standing ready it

deters those who might wish somehow or somewhere to attack it or its vital interests. It serves by standing, and it is preferable from a moral point of view that it be successful by standing rather than by engaging in action. For, whenever the military engages in action, the certainty of death, damage, injury, and suffering is great. The poet's line "They also serve who only stand and wait" seems especially appropriate for our military.

Now if part of the proper mission of the military is to preserve the peace, then *peace* should receive at least as much emphasis as war. So we can point to one of the virtues military officers should cultivate—a virtue that may at first seem odd. That virtue is peacefulness. My purpose in starting with this virtue rather than with some of the traditional virtues of loyalty or courage or honor is to point out that peacefulness is at least as central to the military's mission as the others, and peacefulness has implications for the military that we usually overlook. For this reason it should be made part of our code.

What does the virtue of peacefulness mean, and how might it fit as a component of an Ethical Code for Officers?

Peacefulness, as a virtue, requires first that an officer prefer peace to war. It's possibly true that officers have something to gain by engaging in war. In war they are promoted faster than in peace; they are active instead of passive; they have the excitement some of them join the military for. Officers are trained to fight and in war they can distinguish themselves in a variety of ways. This tension between officers' personal interest in war and their nation's desire for peace makes the virtue of peacefulness all the more necessary.

Preferring peace to war has implications for the way officers train, plan, and act. It need not impede their ability to act immediately if appropriate. But it does affect their view of their mission and the proper way to fulfill it. To emphasize this, the first item of an Ethical Code for Officers might read: *(1) I shall prefer peace to war, and realize that the military serves most effectively when it deters and so prevents war rather than when it engages in war.*

Peacefulness generates in its turn the need to emphasize the virtue of restraint. Restraint may at first seem to be a weak—in former times one might even have said a feminine—virtue. It does not seem to square well with the virtue of courage, typical of the military; nor with the virtue of boldness, which has a ring of the masculine and of strength. Yet such a view misses several essential aspects of restraint. First, restraint is the ability to control oneself and one's action by reason and will. In Friedrich Nietzsche's approach, self-restraint was one of the virtues of the master, not of the slave. It takes training and will to exercise restraint. Any weakling can give vent to his emotions, can succumb to the slightest temptation, can yield to the impulse of the moment. Only those of strong will, only those who have the self-mastery and self-control the stoics, and later Nietzsche, spoke of as capable of restraint. Far from being a weak virtue, restraint is a strong one. Think briefly of a prize-fighter. His fists are held legally to be lethal weapons; he must exercise special restraint in the use of them. While others may be tempted to respond to an insult by hitting the insulter, the prize-fighter is especially precluded from doing so. The analogy of the prize-fighter makes clear the point of restraint with respect to the military.

Society gives the military a monopoly on the use of the major instruments of force. Society does not permit access to these powerful weapons to any other individual or portion of society—the police included. It is an enormous instance of trust. It is reasonable to give this monopoly to the military only on condition that the military will exercise the greatest restraint in its use. In some countries the military uses the force under its control to its own benefit—to topple political regimes, to secure power and governmental control for itself. It is the trust and expectation of the American people and of the system of government in which we live that the force entrusted to the military will be used only as directed by the legitimately elected government. The military is not to use it against the people, the source of their power. In our society, this means the military is subservient to the political order, with the President of the United States the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. The trust is enormous, and the corresponding burden on those who assume that trust and have custody of the monopoly of force is likewise enormous.

The obligation of restraint means more than this, however. Not only is the military to exercise restraint in using its might and power only for purposes sanctioned by the people through the political system, but the military is also expected and required to use restraint in carrying out the tasks assigned to it. Restraint is part of the very notion of a just war. There are *rules* of war, and the exercise of restraint means force must be directed against the enemy, not against civilians or non-combatants. This is part of everyone's general obligation not to kill others except in self-defense, and then only when necessary. Where others might be tempted to kill indiscriminately, the



military professional will use the force required, but *only* the force required. As Sergeant York well knew, where possible it is preferable to take one's enemies prisoner rather than kill them; where surgical strikes are possible, these are preferable to the indiscriminate use of force. The problem of the moral legitimacy of nuclear war hinges on the proper use of force. And the restraint necessary when one has at one's disposal such weapons is clear and beyond dispute. Lack of restraint on the part of the military in today's world might all too easily lead to the destruction of mankind.

In this regard, the obligation of restraint is greater on both the American and the Soviet military than on others. For both of these groups have access to a store of force that other nations and their military do not have. Nor will the absence of necessary restraint on the part of the military in other countries have the same consequences for mankind as will the lack of restraint on the part of the United States or the Soviet Union.

The greater one's power, the greater one's obligation of restraint. It is the exercise of this restraint that sometimes makes superpowers look impotent. But we all know better than that.

Although the presence of nuclear weapons increases the need for restraint, it does not change the necessity for restraint on lower and less dramatic levels. Officers owe it to their men to exercise restraint in time of war, exposing them to danger only when and to the degree necessary. If we were to consider restraint as an Aristotelian moral virtue, it would fall between inability to act on the one extreme and rashness on the other. Restraint is not timidity. It is the child born of power and responsibility. It is of

less need for the weak, and of the most urgent necessity for the strong. Those who bear the monopoly of force in our society have, I suggest, a special demand of restraint placed upon them, and require the virtue of restraint to a degree not required of others.

The military in general has a special moral obligation for restraint, and each of its members shares this obligation by belonging actively to the group. Each of the members has the obligation not only to live up to proper standards of the military but to make sure that other members do so also. Since society gives a monopoly of force to the military, it is the obligation of each of the officers of the military not only to use that force properly, but to see to it that others within the military do so also. Responsibility for the proper use of force is both the responsibility of each of the officers of the military and the responsibility of the military as a whole.

If an Ethical Code for Officers were established it might well have as a component: *(2) I shall use the utmost restraint in the use of force, using only as much as necessary to fulfill my mission.*

The restraint mandated of the military, moreover, takes on a special focus when joined with our third virtue. This virtue is less controversial but more complicated than that of restraint. It is the virtue of obedience, a virtue which for the military officer is doubly complex.

According to Nietzsche, courage and restraint were master virtues, but obedience was a slave virtue. And since obedience is often considered a virtue proper to children and subordinates, obedience as a virtue of the military officer must be carefully analyzed. Obedience for the military officer is doubly complex

because every military officer must both take and give orders, and because every officer, insofar as he fills a role or position in the military structure, obeys and commands both as someone filling a role and as an individual moral being.

I shall unpack some of the implications of this for the officer after stating two commonplaces. First, no one is morally permitted to do what is immoral. Second, every officer is not only an officer but also a human being. Since human beings are moral beings, no one ceases to be a moral being by becoming or being a military officer. Officers fill their roles, but they are morally responsible as individuals for what they do in those roles. These truisms have important implications for obedience.

Obedience involves doing what one is commanded to do by a superior, and it always has a dual aspect. For in obeying a command, one always does two actions (or one action with a dual description). One action is the action of obeying. The other action is doing whatever it is that one is commanded to do. The first act, that of obeying, consists in doing the second action, namely what one is commanded to do. But it is important to distinguish the two. For although we may say obedience is a virtue and one acts morally in obeying one's legitimate superior, human beings are never morally permitted to do what is immoral. So if one's legitimate superior commands one to do what is immoral—for instance, to kill innocent people—one cannot have the moral obligation to obey that command: and if one does obey, such obedience is not virtuous but vicious.

Actions are not made right or wrong by any individual's *fiat* or command. They are right or wrong because of the kinds of actions they are or because of

their consequences or for some similar reason. If they are immoral, they cannot be made moral by being commanded by someone. But there are many actions that in themselves are neither morally right or wrong if commanded or forbidden by one in authority. In this sense obedience is said to be a moral virtue and acting as one is told by a superior is morally obligatory. Such actions might be said to be indirectly morally obligatory. They are not obligatory in themselves but only if commanded by legitimate authority for valid reasons.

The obedience expected of children is obedience to the legitimate commands of their parents, in areas where parents have the legitimate authority to guide them, set rules for their welfare, and so on. A comparable claim is true in the military. Legitimate authority is specified in the table of organization of each branch of the armed forces. The ranks of officers indicate a hierarchy of authority, and certain internal links spell out the area of legitimate command. In the army a company commander can give orders to his lieutenants that other captains are not authorized to give them, for instance, concerning the running of the company. The President, as Commander-in-Chief, has the authority to command the highest general—a fact General MacArthur recognized, and a fact that keeps the military by right subservient to the political realm.

Legitimate orders are those coming from legitimate authorities, in areas in which they have authority to make decisions and issue commands, always subject to the restriction that what they command is not immoral. Their commands, if they are to be legitimate, must always respect those whom they

command as moral beings. Subordinates are not slaves or machines, but human beings.

In formulating an Ethical Code for Officers we might therefore propose two additional principles: (3) *I shall obey all legitimate orders, but only legitimate orders;* and (4) *I shall always remember that those beneath me are moral beings worthy of respect and I shall never command them to do what is immoral.*

Of course, as guidelines, these hinge on an understanding of what is moral and what is not, and presuppose such understanding.

Commands are not always direct orders to do a specific action: "Turn right!" "Halt!" "March!" Orders, especially to officers, are frequently broad commands: "Free the hostages!" "Take that hill!" "Secure a beachhead within 24 hours!" "Protect the left flank!" and so on. They prescribe an objective and leave the means of securing that objective up to the person commanded, expecting him, as a professional, to use his skill and judgement.

Commands given from the top, therefore, filter down for their execution. At each level they typically get translated into a series of more specific orders. The command to take a town might be given by a general to a regimental commander, who in turn issues implementing orders to his battalion commanders, who in turn issue different implementing orders to their company commanders, and so on down the line. At each stage below the initial one and before the final one each person both gets and gives commands. At each stage each person is constrained by morality not to obey an immoral command and not to command what is immoral. Unless clearly immoral—for instance, an order to kill innocent civilians—most orders are routinely accepted and

implemented, and the evaluation is automatic, with moral questions raised only in exceptional circumstances.

In the chain of command, there is a certain amount of discretion in any order that states an end but does not specify a means. As moral beings, however, we are responsible not only for our own actions but also for the chain of actions that we initiate.

The commander who says, "Do this. I don't care how you do it but do it," is morally responsible for how the job he commands gets done. Good commanders must care *how* a job gets done. The injunction to use only the amount of force required to do the job, for instance, sets limits on what is morally permissible. And clearly there are other limits. Imagine, for instance, the command to win, no matter how — no matter whether innocent civilians are killed, no matter whether one's own men are lost in unreasonable and unnecessary numbers and ways, or no matter whether nuclear weapons are introduced in the last-ditch effort to win. Those who issue such commands are responsible for the commands. More stringently still, commanders are morally responsible for the ways their orders are carried out, even if they aren't issued with any intention of commanding what is immoral. So those in authority must consider both whether their orders are justifiable, and whether they can be carried out morally. Moreover, through appropriate SOP or specific guidelines (such as the inculcation of norms through an ethical code) commanders are morally required to make sure that their orders are not immorally carried out. This principle was affirmed in the case of General Yamashita at the end of World War II. An officer who does not care

how his orders are carried out both acts immorally and does not deserve to be an officer.

A code might make this clear by specifying: *(5) I am responsible for what I command and for how my orders are carried out.*

It might be argued an officer merely fills a certain position in a hierarchy. He plays a role in a complex organization. He does not determine his opponent — that's a political decision. The armed forces are given a task not of their choosing. They are trained to fulfill it. And an essential part of their success consists in immediate, obedient response to orders from a superior. This is drilled into them. To introduce moral considerations is wrongheaded, fails to understand the nature of the military and the importance of orders and obedience, ignores the nature of combat, and is the prejudice of academic theoreticians or philosophers, sitting in the security of their office armchairs.

The objection is a standard one concerning roles and the supposed overriding obligation when in a role to do what the role requires. As an individual, an officer may be kind and care for his men. He does not wish them to die. But as a military commander, having been given an objective, he must obey orders and issue appropriate commands even though he knows that as a result some, perhaps many, of his men, and perhaps he himself, may be killed.

In reply, nothing I have said denies the legitimacy of roles and the obligations of those in roles to do what is required by and for the organization, even if harm comes to some people as a result of the action.

But since we are never morally permitted to do what is immoral, we are not permitted to do so in a

role any more than we are permitted to do so as individuals. The instant obedience expected in battle is compatible with refusal to do what is immoral. Military training may attempt to make obedience automatic; some leaders may even wish to make soldiers into automata or machines. But that's impossible. Military personnel remain human and moral beings, no matter what their rank, role, or position. And not all orders require automatic response. Clearly an order specifying only ends leaves the means up to those commanded. It is expected they will think about the best and most appropriate way to secure the objective. In such instances automata would be useless. We depend on the ability of the officer given the objective to decide, on the basis of the situation and his training, intelligence, and skill, what needs to be done. The proper response to such a command is a morally responsible one.

Still others may balk at the idea that it is immoral to command the impossible. For military legends—Alexander, Hannibal, and Patton come to mind—are made of those who did the seemingly impossible. But we have to distinguish those instances in which a commander ordered others to do the impossible from those in which a commander leads his men in an attempt to do what seems impossible. The difference is important. For the willingness to endure extreme hardships with subordinates in an attempt to achieve an objective is *prima facie* evidence an officer is not using his subordinates as a means only, but is asking of them only what he is asking of himself as well. A sixth component of an Ethical Code for Officers suggests itself: (6) *I will never order those under me to do what I would not myself be willing to do in a like situation.*



Obedience is a virtue. It is not only for children. For adults it is a difficult virtue. When one is on the receiving end of an order, obedience requires putting another's will and priorities over one's own. When one is on the commanding end, it requires the assumption of responsibility, perhaps responsibility for an end about which one has doubts or reservations. When viewed in this way obedience is indeed not a slave virtue, as Nietzsche suggests, but a master virtue, full of strength.

I have said enough to suggest how a Code of Ethic for Officers might be derived. My mini-code reads:

*(1) I shall prefer peace to war, and realize that the military serves most effectively when it deters and so prevents war rather than when it engages in war.*

*(2) I shall use the utmost restraint in the use of force, using only as much as necessary to fulfill my mission.*

*(3) I shall obey all legitimate orders, but only legitimate orders.*

*(4) I shall always remember that those beneath me are moral beings worthy of respect and I shall never command them to do what is immoral.*

*(5) I am responsible for what I command and for how my orders are carried out.*

*(6) I will never order those under me to do what I would not myself be willing to do in a like situation.*

Obviously, these six items don't constitute either a complete or an ideal code. For purposes of illustration I have chosen three virtues—peacefulness, restraint, and obedience—because they are frequently ignored and because they are important with respect to the mission of the military. I would hope that any

code, however, would not only list items to be memorized but that every officer would be expected to be able to derive and justify each of the items.

The code in its full form should contain a detailed discussion of the meaning and implementation of the items it contains. A code that simply, for example, listed the components I discussed above, without any indication of how they were developed and of how they might be applied, would not be very useful. I derive the components I suggest from the mission of the military and the virtues appropriate to that mission. The list could easily be extended by considering other aspects of the military's mission and other virtues appropriate to it—including perhaps the traditional virtues of loyalty, courage, honor, and so on.

Any code will be general and exceptions to it may be necessary. Let me therefore emphasize that despite the importance of a code, no code, even as it acts as a guide, should be accepted and followed uncritically. For a code, being a set of general commands, has the status of any other command, and is limited by the considerations we have already seen.

Finally, why develop a code? There are some advantages to developing and having a code of ethics for officers. First, the very exercise of developing one is in itself worthwhile; it forces a large number of people within the military to think through in a fresh way their mission and the important obligations they as a group and as individuals have with respect to society as a whole. I have already suggested that, in the context of possible nuclear war, the mission of the military has changed significantly. Direct moral attention should be given to these changes. Secondly, once adopted, such a code could generate continuing discussion and possible modification by officers

throughout the armed services. This would be helpful and worthwhile. Third, it could be used to help inculcate into new officers the perspective of responsibility, the need to think about their actions morally, and the importance of developing the virtues appropriate to their positions. Fourth, a code could be used as a document to which members of the military and the military as a whole could point when asked to do something contrary to it. Fifth, a code could be used to provide guidelines for reevaluating the UCMJ and other codes or statements. Sixth, it might be used to reassure the citizens of the country that the military appreciates the trust placed in it and that it has taken appropriate steps to justify that trust. Finally, a code could be used by the citizens as a touchstone against which to judge whether the military was living up to its obligations.

All this can be accomplished by developing an Ethical Code for Officers. Such a code can be developed whether or not the military is considered a profession. If it were a profession additional claims might be made for the code and it might have additional components. But I have tried to spell out at least in part how an appropriate and useful code can and should be developed whether or not the military is a profession. Regardless of this, the military and its officers have serious obligations that are better spelled out and defended than either assumed or ignored. Any code will have defects, will be open to misuse, and might be construed as self-serving. But if properly and conscientiously constructed, it will produce more good than harm. And that in itself is sufficient justification for developing an Ethical Code for Officers.

*Part II*

# **MILITARY LEADERSHIP**



*James B. Stockdale*

## **MACHIAVELLI, MANAGEMENT, AND MORAL LEADERSHIP**

**E**XTORTION, the squeeze-play drawing out of victims by force or compulsion is dramatized in Godfather movies as an easily recognized, explicit, usually illegal way of conducting business. In reality, though, it is conducted much more frequently in subtler ways—ways which are both more difficult to recognize and more difficult to deal with. And by no means are these ways illegal, at least not in the sense that I use the word. We frequently face extortionary pressures in our everyday life, for extortion is just a concentrated form of manipulation through the use of fear and guilt. We who are in hierarchies—be they academic, business, military, or some other sort—are always in positions in which people are trying to manipulate us, to get moral leverage on us. It is the

---

Vice Admiral James B. Stockdale, US Navy (Ret.), has distinguished himself as a pilot, air wing commander, Naval War College President, author, and a Vietnam POW. He is now at the Hoover Institution in California. This essay is reprinted from *Proceedings* with permission. Copyright © (1980) US Naval Institute. This article has also been reprinted in the US Air Force Academy *Journal of Professional Military Ethics*, August 1982.

wise leader who comes to the conclusion that he can't be had if he can't be made to feel guilty. That is as true today in a free environment as it was for me during my years in prison camp. You have got to keep yourself clean—never do or say anything of which you can be made to be ashamed—in order to avoid being manipulated.

A smart man, an ethical man, never gives a manipulator an even break. He is always prepared to quench the extortionist's artful insinuation of guilt with the icewater of a truthful, clear-conscienced put-down. The more benign the environment, the more insidious is the extortionist's style. "Then Arthur learned," says the legend, "as all leaders are astonished to learn, that peace, not war, is the destroyer of men; that tranquility, rather than danger, is the mother of cowardice; and that not need, but plenty, brings apprehension and unease."

This is not to suggest that there is only one way to lead, one manner of leadership, one style that best fits all circumstances. Of course not. I have merely said that all styles must be built on moral virtue. On specific leadership styles, I learned much from a talk by a psychoanalyst named Michael Maccoby. With a comprehensive understanding of American history, and after in-depth interviews of more than 200 American leaders of the 1970s, Maccoby concluded that there were four dominant leadership styles in the American past.

Now there are two things to remember as I quickly go over this analysis of Maccoby's. First of all, examples of men who embody each style have always been around and are still around; it's just that the challenges of different historic periods seemed to draw out particular types of leaders. And second,

don't look for progress in leadership styles as we walk through this analysis. The leaders as leaders or as men don't get better as we follow the historic process.

From the Declaration of Independence until the credit system started to grow in the 1870s after the Civil War, most American leaders fell into a category he calls "craftsmen." They were "do-it-yourself" guys: self-reliant, strong-willed, cautious, suspicious, harder on themselves than they are on others. Benjamin Franklin was cited as their prototype then, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn now. Their target of competition was not other men, but rather their idea of their own potential. Craftsmen climbed ladders not to get ahead of others, but to achieve that level of excellence they believed they had within themselves. They are mountain climbers, not players of what systems analysts call "zero-sum games." They liked to make up their own minds; they did not buy school solutions. Craftsmen were men of conscience.

The industrial revolution and the need of its necessary credit and banking base were met by a new breed of leaders: Maccoby called them the "jungle fighters." Jungle fighters played "zero-sum games" with gusto; there was just so much business out there and these were the men who knew how to stake out territory and get it. Andrew Carnegie, the steel magnate, was the prototype. Like craftsmen, jungle fighters were also men of conscience. Although they could sit at the board of directors' table and figuratively decapitate incompetents with aplomb, they grieved. Characteristically they did not dodge issues; they settled scores eyeball to eyeball, tasting not only the self-satisfaction of authority but also the agony of pity.

After World War I, as the giant businesses the jungle fighters had built became bureaucracies, and as "public relations" grew into an everyday national preoccupation, those jungle fighters were gradually displaced by the smoother "organization men." Like the jungle fighters, the organization men were paternalistic and authoritarian. But unlike those pioneers of industry and finance who were motivated primarily by competitive zeal, "organization men," our psychoanalyst believes, were more motivated by a fear of failure. They were, nevertheless, characteristically honest; they were cautious men of conscience. They looked men in the eye when they fired them. They were "men of the heart," possessing qualities with an emotional content: a sense of commitment, loyalty, humor, and spontaneity.

In the early 1960s, a fourth style emerged to take the prominent leadership role. Maccoby identifies practitioners of this style as "the gamemen." The gamemen, impatient under the yoke of their paternalistic and authoritarian bosses, and educated more often than not in game-theory-oriented business schools, turned over a new page in leadership practices. The gamemen believe that if one properly analyzes the "game" of life, the "game" of management, the "game" of leadership, one sees that it is not necessary to frame the problem as a "zero-sum game." Rather, in their minds, American life can be analyzed as a "game" in which any number can play and win.

These gamemen were relaxed, objective, open-minded, detached, cerebral swingers. Such emotional baggage as commitment or conscience they deemed inefficient and unnecessary. "Play our cards rationally to win and go to bed and sleep like a baby without



remorse." Some bothered with love and families; many gave them a tentative try and quit when they found them too burdensome. Maccoby said that there was a theatrical production that typified the leaders of each of these four ages and that the drama of the gamesmen was portrayed in the movie "The Sting." Your might remember that screenplay; in it, fair, competitive cooperative swingers, with the aid of teamwork and technology, destroyed the hungup, authoritarian "Godfather."

The gamesmen, concluded psychoanalyst Maccoby, were basically "men of the head": cool intellectual types, walking calculating machines. "Men of the head" do many things well, but often have trouble coping with unpleasantness. These self-confident, cool, flexible men don't like to discipline people, they don't like to look people in the eye when they fire them. Moreover, they often crave to be loved, and that is a great leadership weakness. True leaders must be willing to stake out territory and identify and declare enemies. They must be fair and they may be compassionate, but they cannot be addicted to being loved by everybody. The man who has to be loved is an extortionist's dream. That man will do anything to avoid face-to-face unpleasantness; often he will sell his soul for praise. He can be had.

It was in the heyday of these gamesmen that some of their number, the cool, glib, analytical, cerebral so-called defense intellectuals took charge of the Pentagon under the direction of Robert Strange McNamara. At that juncture, I was fortunate enough to take a two-year sabbatical from military service for study at Stanford University. It was there that I started asking myself what truly rules the world: sentiment, efficiency, honor, justice?

The educated man, particularly the educated leader, copes with the fact that life is not fair. The problem for education is not to teach people how to deal with success but how to deal with failure. And the way to deal with failure is not to invent scapegoats or to lash out at your followers. Moreover, a properly educated leader, especially when harassed and under pressure, will know from his study of history and the classics that circumstances very much like those he is encountering have occurred from time to time on this earth since the beginning of history. He will avoid the self-indulgent error of seeing himself in a predicament so unprecedented, so unique, as to justify his making an exception to law, custom, or morality in favor of himself. The making of such exceptions has been the theme of public life throughout much of our lifetimes. For 20 years, we've been surrounded by gamesmen unable to cope with the wisdom of the ages. They make exceptions to law and custom in favor of themselves because they choose to view ordinary dilemmas as unprecedented crises.

Of course, it has been generally toward the above issue that I directed a course at the Naval War College. My formula for attacking this problem—both at the War College and in my present assignment at The Citadel—is the assignment of enough hard-core philosophy (the Book of Job, the Socratic dialogues of Plato, some of Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*, Epictetus' *Enchiridion*, enough of Immanuel Kant to understand his concept of duty) and the reading of enough high-quality ultimate situation literature (Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *House of the Dead*, Albert Camus' *Plague*, Joseph Conrad's *Typhoon*, and Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*) as to deter self-pity when in extremis. With philosophy as the parent discipline,

a discussion of courage might be focused on the writer who most thoroughly treated it, Aristotle. This might lead to the question of the validity of his viewpoint that courage is impossible in the absence of fear, that courage might be defined as a measure of how well one handles fear. How about the relationship between fear and imagination? Conrad has one of his characters state that imagination is the mother of fear. Must not a leader have imagination? If that breeds fear, might that not sap his courage? He surely must have courage above all else . . . etc. From such readings and discussions come understandings and clarifications of those elements of leadership which served in antiquity and those which must serve now.

Leadership must be based on goodwill. Goodwill does not mean posturing and, least of all, pandering to the mob. It means obvious and wholehearted commitment to helping followers. We are tired of leaders we fear, tired of leaders we love, and most tired of leaders who let us take liberties with them. What we need for leaders are men of the heart who are so helpful that they, in effect, do away with the need of their jobs. But leaders like that are never out of a job, never out of followers. Strange as it sounds, great leaders gain authority by giving it away.

I am firmly convinced that the time I spent at Stanford has been a major force in molding my own personality as a leader. And I am just as firmly convinced that education in the classics and in the principles of human relationships gave me far better preparation for being a prisoner of war than did the traditional survival and evasion training. My ideas on the art of moral leadership received their most

profound testing in the stress and degradation—yes, in the extortion environment—of a Communist prisoner of war camp.

The intensity and stark drama of my eight years in North Vietnam provided a quantity and range of leadership challenge that would more than fill an ordinary lifetime. In mere months or weeks, men made and destroyed their reputations. Those behind bars seemed to be scanning reams of data on the problems of good and evil in fast time. The extortion system, powered by our enemy's willingness to torture and impose isolation, quickly drove to the surface issues of moral integrity which at the pace of normal life could take years to foster and erupt into public view.

For united resistance, men had to get on quickly with the business of assimilating knowledge of the character traits of their fellow prisoners. This knowledge had to be more penetrating and more calculating than the sort commonly found sufficient for amicable social life out here in freedom. Is the newcomer emotionally stable? (We had to make a good guess as to whether he had the steadfastness and composure to warrant being trusted with secret material in that torture environment.) Does he have moral integrity? In the privacy of the torture room, will he go to the wall in silence, or do what is so commonplace in the business world nowadays and try to make a deal? Is he sophisticated enough to avoid falling for the interrogator's bait? Will he work his way out on a limb by "gabbing" after that clever interrogator has dangled before him such American-life enticements as: Let us reason together; You are a pragmatic people, meet us halfway?

In the extortion environment one can always better his own position at the expense of his fellows by

holding still for the manipulator's setting up of subtle compromises. A loner makes out by making acknowledged or tacit deals. This will never do. The intensity of life in jail clearly illuminated for us prisoners of war the truth that for the greatest good for the greatest number of us, for our maximum happiness, maximum self-respect, maximum protection of one another, each of us had to submerge our individual survival instincts into an ideal of universal solidarity. "No deals" and "Unity over self" became our mottos.

Some of you are doubtless skeptical of the practicability of such ideals which seem to ask more of a man than human nature might be thought to allow. To the skeptics let me say right off that when there is leadership by example, and when there is a commonly shared threat of total estrangement and humiliation, united magnanimous behavior can become a reality. When a man looks at the bottom of the barrel through creeping and growing fissures in the thin veneer of civilization that coats his existence, he suddenly realizes that his slip back into barbarism could come about in weeks. As he peers over the edge of his world, it dawns on him how lonesome and terrible it would be down there without communication, friends, or common cultural ties. He vividly realizes how men, fellow countrymen, need one another for understanding and for sanity. As he sees himself clinging to a receding civilization with his fingernails, it becomes clear to him that "No deals" and "Unity over self" are not goody-goody idealistic slogans; rather they are practical guides to action.

We saw that we had to build and tend our own civilization if we were to keep ourselves from becoming animals. A man must relate to a community, a commonality of communication style, a commonality

of ritual, of laws, of traditions, of poetry, of shared dreams, if he is to prevail, if he is to resist. "Man does not live by bread alone." Learning the truth and full meaning of that biblical adage was lesson one for us in that crucible of pressure. It goes without saying that the first job of leadership is to provide the communication necessary for that civilization, that ritual, those laws, those traditions.

The problem was to improvise a communications system for a prison camp in which everybody lived in solitary confinement, a solitary confinement in silence, a solitary confinement in which the use of torture was considered just punishment for those who break that silence to communicate with their fellows. Our Vietnam enemies gave us two ways to go on this. We could lie low and not communicate and go to seed over the years of silence and solitude. (One starts "looking for a friend" after a couple of years.) Or we could communicate as a matter of duty and take our lumps. Since the dictates of conscience and morality made the latter the only way to go, the problem became how to communicate stealthily. For us, trapped in isolation in Hanoi, the means for that communication was a tap code that would break through the walls of solitary confinement, the walls of silence. (For the mechanics of the code, I suggest reading Commander Everett Alvarez's "Sound: A POW's Weapon," pages 91-93 in the August 1976 *Proceedings*.)

Leadership basics are vividly portrayed in the prison camp example. Prison serves as a useful "test bed" (to use a test pilot expression) in which to study in detail man's behavior under stress, stress of the sort under which many of life's crucial decisions are necessarily made. Mark this down in your book as

lesson two: In the high-stress situation, "status" will not carry you as a leader. That is to say, you have to have more going for you than your title, your seniority, your position in your hierarchy, your rank. You cannot get by with performing like a quarterback who is functional only while being protected "in the pocket," you've got to be able to scramble and improvise, on your feet, and alone. Even this assumes that by the time the pressure is on, you would have earned your followers' respect, and not just their fear or friendship. Unless people respect you as a leader, when the fat is in the fire they'll just listen to your orders and calmly walk away.

Lesson three: under stress, ordinary "transactional" leadership will never cut it. That is to say, transactional leadership propelled simply by the effect of give and take, leadership driven by the base instincts of the marketplace and bargaining table whereby the leader makes an accommodation in the expectation that his followers will make a complementary accommodation, simply will not stand up. This may come as news to you because the "transactional" leader/follower relationship is so much a part of our way of doing business in everyday economic, social, even academic life. But what to us is the ordinary dance of life, the dance propelled by continuous compromise, finds itself floundering under pressure. Inputs are needed from "transforming" leaders. Transforming leaders don't simply analyze what they think their people want and then try to give them part of it and hope they will receive a counter-accommodation in return. Transforming leaders instruct and inspire their followers to recognize worthy needs, and they make those needs their wants. They have a way of raising their followers

out of their everyday selves and into their better selves, of making them conscious of the high-minded goals that lie unconscious beneath their self-centered desires. In summary, the transforming leader has the wisdom to read the minds of his flock, to understand what they want, to know what they ought to want, and he has the persuasive power to implant the latter into their hearts.

In all that I have been saying, I've made the points that leaders under pressure must keep themselves absolutely clean morally (the relativism of the social sciences will never do). They must lead by example, must be able to implant high-mindedness in their followers, must have competence beyond status, and must have earned their followers' respect by demonstrating integrity. What I've been describing as the necessary leadership attributes under pressure are the bedrock virtues all successful leaders must possess, "under pressure and otherwise." Prison was just the "test bed," just the meatgrinder that vividly illuminated these prime building blocks for me.



*Roger L. Shinn*

## ETHICAL ASPECTS OF THE EXERCISE OF COMMAND

**I** COME TO YOU as an old soldier who has obeyed many commands and grumbled about quite a few, as a wartime company commander who issued many commands, some effective and some futile, and as a scholar and teacher who for 25 years has worked in the field of social ethics, trying to learn what the processes of our society do to people.

I am aware of the many worlds of experience that meet. In fact, each of us individually is a meeting ground of differing worlds of experience. One of my students this past year impressed me with the way in which worlds can interact in one person. He was an officer in the United States Army, sensitive to the values and loyalties of the military world. He was a chaplain, an ordained clergyman, with commitments to his church and its faith. He was a candidate for the

---

Dr. Shinn, retired, Reinhold Niebuhr Professor of Christian Ethics at Union Theological Seminary, New York, was an infantry officer in Europe in World War II. This essay given at Ft. Meyer, Virginia, 26 July 1973, was published in the *Military Chaplain's Review*, Winter 1974, and reprinted in the *US Air Force Academy Journal of Professional Military Ethics*, December 1982.

degree of Doctor of Education, alert to the demands of the world of scholarship. And he was a black man, sharing the aspirations and anger of his racial group at this particular time in history. Thus he, a rare and thoughtful human being, found in himself these four worlds of experience each with its prestige systems, its goals, its carefully cultivated symbols. The act that earned him status in one world could cost him status in another. So he had to ask himself: was he an authority figure or a rebel, a man ambitious to rise in an establishment or a challenger of all establishments? Because he was such a questioner, he was a better human being.

We here find out identities in many communities. We look for approval to varied reference groups. We laugh at different jokes, our spines tingle to diverse music, and we become angry over contrasting types of sacrilege. We may know the worlds of the military, of political leadership, of diplomacy, of business, of church and synagogue; of higher education, of racial heritage, of sexual identification.

These worlds of experience are also worlds of discourse, with differing vocabularies. Bulls and bears on the prairies and in the forests are not the same as bulls and bears on Wall Street. Plumbers mean one thing in my kitchen, something else in national politics. Laundering has a clear meaning at home, another meaning in financing electoral campaigns. The word "gay" has quite different meanings in different communities. Long hair and a shaggy beard are a way of say "I belong" in some worlds and "I don't belong and don't want to belong" in other worlds.

So communication is difficult at the interface between different worlds of discourse. What I say will

come through differently to different hearers. But precisely at these interfaces communication may be rewarding. I welcome the opportunity to try. And I expect that the most challenging questions you ask will be the ones from which I learn most.

I. The topic is "Ethical Aspects of the Exercise of Command." I begin by describing three paradoxes that I find in the nature of military command. They are there because life, seen honestly, is paradoxical. Conflicting values are part of human experience, and they pull us in opposing directions.

The first paradox comes out of the relation of command to the American ethos and experience. In some societies the basic idea of command raises no ethical problems, because people assume that God or nature made some people to command and others to obey. The American Heritage, which is related to the biblical heritage, does not. At the birth of our country the Founding Fathers said: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights. . . ." Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and their co-signers knew that people are not equal in athletic ability, intelligence, or governmental skills. They meant that people are equal in human dignity, in basic rights and responsibilities.

If that is the case, what is the justification of command? Why should any human being have a moral right to command another human being? To claim such a right is to assume a heavy burden of proof.

Yet life often requires that we accept that burden of proof—nowhere more obviously than in combat situations. Events require decisions—prompt decisions. The success of a mission and human lives are at stake. There is no time to call an assembly and work toward a consensus, to appoint a committee that will report next year, to consult legal counsel, to develop an encounter group. Authority must be located—preferably in the best person, certainly in a person trained and designated for that kind of decision-making.

So the exercise of command is justifiable. I suppose it is inherent in governmental processes, but especially conspicuous in military organizations. Yet it is ethically paradoxical, and it always requires the effort of justification.

I remember confronting the issue in my first week of basic training at Camp Wolters, Texas, in 1941. The platoon sergeant, a regular Army man, was explaining to his fresh trainees the importance of obedience to orders. After all, he said, we were not exceptional in having to take orders. The NCO's took orders from the company officers, who took orders from battalion officers, and so up the line to the Commanding General of the Division. And he took orders through a chain of command that went to the Chief of Staff in Washington. And he took orders from the Commander in Chief, the President. "And," the sergeant wound up, "who do you suppose the Commander in Chief takes orders from? From you, the voters!" That, I found, was no comfort when I was ordered to do Sunday guard duty. But it was an important evidence of the weight our system of government attaches to mutual responsibility.

I thought about that responsibility often. I thought about it when I was commissioned and became a platoon leader. I rather like the title of platoon leader. When I became a company *commander* the designation was more perplexing. That anybody should be labeled a commander of other people raised all the perplexities that have haunted Western civilization from the times of the Hebrew prophets and Plato. I understood the necessity and the rationale. I hope I never forgot that the exercise of command involves an immense burden of responsibility and the possibilities of terrible abuse.

The second ethical perplexity of command has to do specifically with military command and the whole morality of war. War is, at best, a tragic necessity—an answer to aggression and oppression. It is, at worst, mankind's most cruel and destructive activity.

The message of the horrors of war and the good of peace comes, not only from pacifists, but from the heart of the military establishment. The Strategic Air Command has chosen the motto: "Peace is our profession." At the entrance to the Carlisle Barracks, just under the words, "Army War College," is the quotation, "Not to promote war, but to preserve peace," from "Elihu Root, Founder."<sup>1</sup> General Eisenhower, thinking about nuclear war as President of the United States, said in 1960: "War is now utterly preposterous."<sup>2</sup> General Bradley described war as "a wretched debasement of all the thin pretensions of civilization."<sup>3</sup> General Patton, the most aggressive of all generals in World War II, nevertheless saw the moral and religious paradoxes of his role. On his first Sunday in Normandy, he had reported: "I went to a Catholic Field Mass where all of us were armed. As we knelt in the mud in the slight drizzle, we could

distinctly hear the roar of the guns, and the whole sky was filled with airplanes on their missions of destruction . . . quite at variance with the teachings of the religion we were practicing."<sup>4</sup>

Like many of you, I have lived with this perplexity. I have believed it my conscientious duty to enter into war for the sake of justice and peace. In a world where hard ethical decisions involve conflicts of values, the military commander is not uniquely involved in such conflicts, but he is more openly involved than most people. And he stands peculiarly in a situation of temptation. Often the incentives that influence people generally—professional advancement, public acclaim, the approval of peers—are in his case related to achievement in war. The temptations are great to forget that the ultimate mission of the military is "not to promote war, but to preserve peace."

The third ethical paradox arises out of the cultural situation in which our generation lives—throughout most of the world and quite specifically in this nation. It is a confused cultural situation with deep disagreements about important human goals. We live in a world that is restive under authority, a world that distrusts concentrated power. An "anti-establishment" mood marks many societies and infiltrates even the most authoritarian societies—even, for example, the Soviet society. Centralized line organizations are not in style. Free-floating, charismatic authority rather than fixed hierarchical authority appeals to many people. Various groups—conspicuously youth, black people, women, poor people, those at the bottom of the status ladder—are saying: "Nobody is going to tell us what to do. We want to make the decisions that affect our destiny."

Such claims sometimes have a rhetorical excess. Nobody makes all the decisions that affect his own destiny. All people live with some restraints, as well as some opportunities, defined by society. But some people have suffered many restraints and few opportunities. So it is not only a contemporary style but also a profound ethical demand that they be heard. The professional leaders of the "new Army" are struggling with hard decisions these days: how can we increase the freedom and dignity of the soldier, what of the old style is "Mickey Mouse" and what is essential, what is the right combination of relaxed and permissive life styles with traditional disciplines?

Although nobody knows for certain the answers, the questions themselves are evidence of the perplexity our entire society faces. Although I live chiefly in, and share the values of, the world of higher education—where protest movements, freedom, and spontaneity have been the recent vogue—I have some appreciation of the values of the military system. I think of two examples.

The first is the racial desegregation of the Army. Like the rest of American society, the Army waited too long to desegregate. But when it moved it moved faster and more effectively than most social institutions—often shaming business, public schools, and churches in the process. There is not the slightest doubt that the processes of command and discipline deserve much of the credit. The current racial problems in the armed services are evidence that command and discipline have limited effects and that the contagious diseases of our society cannot be banned from military life by edict. But the creative uses of command have served the purposes of democracy in the desegregation of the Army.

The second example comes from the experience of prisoners of war. I can barely imagine the ordeal of those soldiers and airmen who fought in what General Maxwell Taylor has called "the dirtiest, most unpleasant and least glorious war in our history," who then suffered the painful physical and psychic experiences of imprisonment.<sup>5</sup> It is to be expected that the wounds of those experiences will not quickly heal. Yet the strength of those men has impressed many people, even among those totally opposed to the war in which they fought. As *Newsweek* columnist Shana Alexander has put it, "these POW's now appear to us to embody precisely those moral qualities of honor, patriotism, discipline and purpose which many of us feel have largely disappeared from American life."<sup>6</sup> From my own far shorter and far less cruel experiences as a prisoner of war, I can testify to the values of the military system of command.

It is not the system for organizing a university, a congress, or a church. The old system is not exactly the system for the future. The military system faces the perplexity of revising its methods to meet a changed cultural situation. And the whole culture faces the perplexity of relating some of its traditional values to the values getting more obvious expression today.

II. I have described three ethical perplexities or paradoxes that I see in the exercise of military command. These will be with us for a while to come. I expect no instant solutions, least of all at this meeting. But I think I see better and worse ways of meeting these perplexities. To understand them we must look at one curious characteristic of systems of



command—to some extent of all systems of command, but most especially of command systems within a democratic society.

Put it this way: a command is compulsory, yet its effectiveness does not depend solely on compulsion. Take the first part of that statement. A command is by its very nature compulsory. It does not begin, "Everybody who feels like it, come along." A command is not a question, a suggestion, a hint, an invitation, an entreaty. It is a command, and there are penalties for non-compliance. But take the second part of the statement. The effectiveness of a command does not depend solely on compulsion. It depends also on morale. General Eisenhower in his *Crusade in Europe* wrote: "Morale is the greatest single factor in successful war. . . . In any long and bitter campaign morale will suffer unless all ranks thoroughly believe that their commanders are concerned first and always with the welfare of the troops who do the fighting." That tells a lot about the nature of command.

Let me reminisce. During the last phases of pre-combat training for World War II, the Ninth Armored Division had a rule that no soldier should be separated from his weapon during training. The Commanding General inspected my company during a lunch break in the field. The company was deployed in such a way that I did not see the next event. One soldier had laid aside his rifle while filling his messkit, and the general told his aide to pick it up. That night I—not the soldier but I—had to report to Division Headquarters to recover the weapon and take a dressing down from the Commanding General. General John Leonard and I both came from Toledo, Ohio, but we never realized that until after the war, and in

any case it would not have done me the slightest bit of good. I returned to the company with the rifle—and with my ears smarting. I had been told, once again, that it was my duty to enforce discipline. I understood the system. But, licking my wounds, I refreshed my memory again on the definition of discipline in the basic infantry field manual: “cheerful willing obedience” to the command of a superior. I knew that there was no discipline without enforcement, but I knew also that no force could compel that obedience be cheerful and willing. Effective command cannot simply be compelled; it must be evoked, won, earned.

I want to mention three ethical qualities of command that have something to do with the winning of discipline. The first is fairness. There must be no favoritism. Inevitably a commanding officer likes some of his subordinates better than others—and his wife likes some of their wives better than others. Probably he likes some of their wives better than others. That does not give him the right to assign the dangerous and unpleasant missions to those he likes least. His commands must be just; they may be strict, but they cannot be a matter of whim.

Most important of all, he avoids favoritism not only among his subordinates but also towards himself. He does not spare himself. He does not issue orders out of his emotional frustrations. He does not take delight in demonstrating his authority. He does not use others for the sake of his ambitions. He matches and seeks to surpass whatever loyalty he demands.

A second quality of command is courage. Everybody knows that soldiers are expected to have courage and that they expect their commanders to have courage. Not everyone thinks through the kinds of courage that life demands. The person conspicuous for one kind of courage may lack another.

A society like ours puts a high value on stability and the achievements of a civilization that has overcome some of the risks that are common to human life elsewhere. We don't expect tigers to pounce on us, bad weather to drive us to starvation, or enemy tribesmen to kill us. Since life is usually less precarious than in most past history, the demand for physical courage in danger is less frequent. It is therefore the more admirable when men who love life conquer their fears and risk their lives for comrades and a cause.

There is another kind of courage equally important—the moral courage to resist pressures and take a stand against immoral acts. Without pretending to know the details, I think that GI Ronald Ridenhour may have had it when he spilled the story of My Lai; or Airman Lonnie Franks when he disclosed General Lavelle's unauthorized bombings of North Vietnam; or Major Hal Knight when he told a Senator of the falsification of records of secret bombings of Cambodia.<sup>8</sup> The man in a chain of command turns over some of his rights of judgment; he must act on the judgments of his superiors, even though his own judgment differs. What he cannot turn over to anybody else is his conscience and his integrity.

The last of the three qualities of command that I have chosen to emphasize, I can describe by means of an anecdote. A few days after the cross-channel invasion of France in World War II, General Marshall flew across the ocean for a conference with General Eisenhower and General Bradley. We are told that they went over the military situation, as commanders do. Then, in a more relaxed way, they fell to talking about war and military leadership. They talked about historic commanders since Gideon. And they put up

the question, what is the indispensable quality for the leader who must order other men to face death. The answer they agreed on came in one word provided by General Marshall. The word was selflessness.

That word is surprising. We expect of commanders a certain kind of self-assurance, a flair, an ability to dramatize themselves, a capacity to project a decisive image. What the three generals meant, I suppose, was that the commander's concern for himself and his status must be less than his concern for the cause he upholds and the troops he commands, leads, and serves. I suggest another word that may help to interpret their word. My word is responsibility.

Responsibility flows both upwards and downwards in a hierarchy. The commander has a responsibility to his superior officers, as they exercise their lawful duties. He has a responsibility to the Constitution of the United States.

As Hal Knight told a Senator in testimony one week in 1973, "Sir, I didn't take an oath to support the military. I took an oath to support the Constitution." It is a responsibility to international laws of war. It is, for many of us, a responsibility to God.

If responsibility—and particularly accountability—is most obviously upwards, moral responsibility also reaches downwards. The commander has a responsibility to those whom he commands. To forget this is to vitiate personal integrity and the ethical validity of the system. In Lord Acton's famous words, "All power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely." I don't know how often these days you hear the old slogan, RHIP. Rank has its privileges. Those privileges are deserved only if rank

has its responsibilities. As the Bible puts it, "Everyone to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more." (Luke 12:48)

There are commanders who understand that. In 1944 Ernie Pyle filed a story from the bruising Italian campaign. It was about the death of a company commander. I, a company commander in training for battle, read the story and aspired to be the kind of troop commander that Ernie Pyle described. I want to share part of that dispatch.

Captain Henry T. Waskow was a company commander in the Thirty-sixth Division. . . . He was very young, only in his middle twenties, but he carried in him a sincerity and gentleness that made people want to be guided by him.

"After my father, he came next," a sergeant told me.

"He always looked after us," a soldier said. "He'd go to bat for us every time."

"I've never knowed him to do anything unfair," another said.

I was at the foot of the mule trail the night they brought Captain Waskow down. The moon was nearly full, and you could see far up the trail . . . Dead men had been coming down the mountain all evening, lashed onto the backs of mules.

The Italian mule skimmers were afraid to walk beside dead men, so Americans had to lead the mules down that night. Even the Americans were reluctant to unlash and lift off the bodies . . . so an officer had to do it himself and ask others to help.

I don't know who that first one was. You feel small in the presence of dead men, and you don't ask silly questions. . . . They laid him on the ground in the shadow of the low stone wall beside the road. We left him there beside the road, that first one, and we all went back in the cow-

shed. . . . We talked soldier talk for an hour or more; the dead man lay all alone, outside in the shadow of the wall.

Then a soldier came into the cowshed and said there were some more bodies outside. We went out into the road. Four mules stood there in the moonlight. . . . The soldiers who led them stood there waiting.

"This one is Captain Waskow," one of them said quietly.

Two men unlashed his body from the mule and lifted it off and laid it in the shadow beside the stone wall. Other men took the other bodies off. Finally, there were five lying end to end in a long row. You don't cover up dead men in the combat zones. They just lie there in the shadows until somebody comes after them.

The unburdened mules moved off to their olive grove. The men in the road seemed reluctant to leave. They stood around, and gradually I could sense them moving, one by one, close to Captain Waskow's body. Not so much to look, I think, as to say something in finality to him, and to themselves. I stood close by and I could hear.

One soldier came and looked down, and he said out loud, "God damn it!"

That's all he said, and then he walked away.

Another one came, and he said, "God damn it to hell anyway!" He looked down for a few last moments and then turned and left.

Another man came, I think he was an officer. It was hard to tell officers from men in the dim light, for everybody was bearded and grimy. The man looked down into the dead captain's face and then spoke directly to him, as though he were alive. "I'm sorry, old man."

Then a soldier came and stood beside the officer and bent over, and he too spoke to his dead captain, not in a whisper but awfully tenderly, and he said, "I sure am sorry, sir."

Then the first man squatted down, and he . . . took the captain's hand, and he sat there for a full five minutes

holding the dead hand in his own and looking intently into the dead face. And he never uttered a sound all the time he sat there.

Finally he put the hand down. He reached over and gently straightened the points of the captain's shirt collar, and then he sort of rearranged the tattered edges of the uniform around the wound, and then he got up and walked away down the road in the moonlight, all alone.

The rest of us went back into the cowshed, leaving the five dead men lying in a line, end to end, in the shadow of the low stone wall. We lay down in the straw in the cowshed, and pretty soon we were all asleep.<sup>9</sup>

Ladies and gentlemen, I give you Captain Waskow as a soldier who understood the responsibilities of command.

#### NOTES

1. For a photograph of the motto, see *Army*, 22 (March 1972): 56.
2. Dwight D. Eisenhower, speech in Rio de Janeiro, Feb. 24, 1960. *New York Times*, February 25, 1960, p. 8.
3. Omar H. Bradley, *A Soldier's Story* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1951), p. 311.
4. George S. Patton, *War as I Knew It* (New York: Pyramid Books, 1966, first published by Houghton Mifflin Co., 1947), p. 94.
5. Maxwell D. Taylor, "Is an Army Career Still Worthwhile," *Army*, 23 (February 1973): 10.
6. Shana Alexander, "Prisoners of Peace," *Newsweek*, 51 (March 5, 1973): 32.

7. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1948), p. 210.

8. Hal Knight, reported in *New York Times*, July 22, 1973, Section 4, p. 3.

9. Ernie Pyle, *Brave Men* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1945), pp. 106-107.



*Manuel M. Davenport*

## ETHICS AND THE MILITARY ORGANIZATION

**F**OLLOWING JOHN LADD,<sup>1</sup> the term "formal organization" distinguishes social systems created specifically to pursue private and public purposes from those, such as families or nations, which exist because certain individuals have united to pursue common purposes. A formal organization such as our military organization exists because it was created to pursue a purpose of the nation, to defend it from possible enemies. Because the military organization is created as a means to an end we, who have created it, tend to evaluate it, as well as other formal organizations, in terms of its instrumental effectiveness. From this tendency two consequences follow. Individual members of the military organization are viewed as components to be retained if their behavior is consistent with the objectives of the organization and to be replaced when it is not. Secondly, we find it all too easy to judge members of the military organization by nothing other than their effectiveness in realizing the objectives of the organization.

---

This article was presented at the Fifth Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics, National Defense University, January 1983, and printed in the *US Air Force Academy Journal of Professional Military Ethics*, August 1983.

Ladd does not consider effectiveness in realizing objectives an ethical standard at all because he does not believe that the alleged goodness of the consequences of any action can provide for it an ethical justification. Thus, he argues that formal organizations inevitably present us with an ethical dilemma: We must choose between sacrificing the benefits they provide or we must sacrifice proper ethical standards and, hence, our truly human nature.<sup>2</sup> Such a conclusion, however, begs the question by assuming without argument that none of the objectives of any formal organization can be ethical and such question-begging is made to seem justified by concentrating upon the objectives of a formal organization as the sole determinant of their ethical nature.

Formal organizations do have objectives but whether they are ethical or not is determined also by their structure, their personnel and the social environment in which these factors interact. For purposes of illustration let's consider, first, the case of a non-military formal organization, which for legal reasons we shall call "the Ramsey Corporation."<sup>3</sup> Founded in 1905 to package and sell bulk chemicals, the Ramsey Corporation gained national attention in 1922 by marketing Zappo, a household drain cleaner composed of sodium hydroxide, sodium nitrate, sodium chloride and aluminum particles. As Martin Ramsey, the chemical engineer who devised the product, knew, Zappo, when added to water, generates heat as the aluminum particles dissolve in solution with sodium hydroxide and as the hydrogen gas thereby formed is oxidized by the sodium nitrate. The heat generated, sufficient to rupture a closed container, dissolves fat and grease in clogged drains.

In 1959, Mrs. Taylor purchased a can of Zappo in Chicago. She removed it from the grocery sack and placed it beside her clogged sink. As she reached to turn on the cold water faucet, the can exploded, burning her face and destroying the sight of both eyes. Subsequently, she sued the Ramsey Corporation for \$1.2 million.

In 1959, the president of Ramsey was Martin Ramsey's son, Arthur, who was still committed to his father's objective, which was to develop new household products and promote them by means of intensive national advertising. In 1959, over 50% of American families who used a drain cleaner used Zappo. Arthur Ramsey was trained in marketing and his vice-president in charge of marketing and advertising was a college classmate with the same training. Other vice-presidents were also close friends of either Arthur or his father and most of the corporation's stock was held by the Ramsey family.

The corporation was structured into three major divisions. Of these research and development was dominant, marketing and advertising second in importance and manufacturing last. Quality control was a subdivision that reported to research and development. All three divisions reported to Arthur Ramsey.

Cans of Zappo had exploded before but it was not until the late fifties, when large suits began to pile up, that the corporation began to consider quality control for the sake of consumer safety. Previously quality control was emphasized to guarantee that the product would be reliable, that when mixed with water it could be counted on to generate sufficient heat to unclog drains. In the late fifties, however, the courts began to enforce the legal doctrines of strict liability and breach of implied warranty and consumers were more willing to sue when injured.

What probably caused the can that blinded Mrs. Taylor to explode was moisture that entered the can because of a screw-cap that was loose due to defective capping machines. After cans were capped they were spray-washed, at which time moisture could enter in an amount sufficient to cause corrosion, which would seal a loose cap but in time as it settled lower cause enough heat to burst the can along the seam. In any event, after the Taylor incident, the Ramsey Corporation replaced the screw-cap, which could withstand 70 p.s.i. of internal pressure, with a flip-top plastic cap that would blow at 15 p.s.i. and this required replacing the capping equipment.

Assuming for the moment that the objective of the Ramsey Corporation, to manufacture and market new household products, was proper, it should be clear that in the period from 1922 to the mid-forties the personnel and structure of the corporation were well suited to the realization of that objective. Top management was in the hands of chemists and marketing specialists who succeeded in developing products that were the first of their kind and which captured and retained large market shares. Because it was a family-held corporation the emphasis on research and marketing was not subject to distraction by stockholders in search of quicker profits. As is made clear by the corporate structure, both quality control and manufacturing were subordinate to research and marketing.

During this same period the social environment was also compatible with the corporation's objective. Most consumers would not have even thought of suing anyone over a defective product and if they had, lawyers would have informed them that such a suit would have to be filed within a fixed time after

purchase and would have to prove breach of stated warranty plus deliberate negligence. But by the late fifties the social environment had changed and the Ramsey Corporation failed to adjust. Investigation of the manufacturing process for Zappo, conducted after the Taylor suit, revealed that no monitoring of humidity in the storage and mixing areas had ever existed, that only the first few cans in a run of several thousand were checked for moisture and only 10% of the capped cans were examined visually, more for appearance than for defects. The message given by management and the administrative structure that quality control and manufacturing were relatively unimportant had been well heeded by the plant workers and their immediate supervisors.

Certainly to adjust to a new social environment in which consumers demand safe products and the courts encourage such demands the Ramsey Corporation will have to make changes in both personnel and structure in order to continue to realize its objective. Existing personnel can be changed not only by replacement but also by retraining. The plant workers must be trained to think in terms of possible harm to consumers and their morale must be raised by a revision in the structure of the corporation. Quality control and manufacturing must be assigned in practice importance equal to research and marketing. Probably Arthur Ramsey and his long-time associates are too closely wedded to the old structure to make the necessary changes.

So far I have left aside two questions which are relevant both to the case under discussion and the broader issue of ethics and formal organizations. Is the objective in itself ethical? Is it right, in this instance, to market a potentially explosive product

which is certainly not necessary for human survival and for which cheaper and safer substitutes like hot water and kerosene are available? Secondly, we must ask: Are the changes in the social environment to which formal organizations must adjust to realize their objectives in themselves right? Is it right, in this particular case, for consumers to expect products that are both efficient and safe and for the courts to support such expectations? Our answers to both questions will depend ultimately upon the comparative values we assign to human freedom and security in our conception of justice.

The Zappo case, then, should illustrate our earlier claim that the ethical nature of formal organizations cannot be determined by evaluating only their objectives. At least five determinations must be made, two of which are external and three of which are internal. We must determine, internally, whether the organization's personnel are the best available to realize the organization's objectives, whether the organization's structure is appropriate to its personnel and the realization of its objectives and whether the organization, given appropriate personnel and structure, is making appropriate adjustments in its pursuit of objectives to the prevailing social environment. Externally, we must determine whether the organization's objectives are ethical and whether the demands made upon the organization by the social environment are ethical.

To justify, and not merely illustrate, our claim that the objectives of a formal organization are not the sole determinant of its ethical nature we must show that formal organizations are capable of moral agency, that is, can make ethical responses to changing situations, and show that the consideration of the consequence of actions is ethically relevant.

As Kenneth Goodpaster has argued,<sup>4</sup> formal organizations are dynamic and can respond to external pressures. Thus, in theory, formal organizations can follow or act in accord with even ethical principles. In practice, such a response is not ethical if it is merely an adjustment necessary to realize a preconceived objective, but it can be an ethical response if it leads to a change which is, or is adopted because it promises to be, an ethical improvement. On this view, to exercise moral agency, or to be morally responsible, does require consideration of the consequences of possible responses or actions. As Frankena puts it,<sup>5</sup> consideration of consequences is relevant but insufficient for moral responsibility. To argue, as does Ladd, that none of the objectives of a formal organization can be ethical requires the assumption that the consideration of consequences is both insufficient and unnecessary for moral responsibility. Such an assumption clearly distinguishes between ethical and expedient action, but it also isolates ethical action from rational behavior.

As we turn, then, to consider the military organization, we will determine whether it is ethical or encourages ethical behavior by examining not only its objectives and the appropriateness of the means utilized to achieve them but also its manner of response to those ethical principles, if any, in its social environment. Most previous consideration of this question has assumed that the objectives of the military organization are ethical and has examined only the appropriateness of the means utilized. In a most provocative article published by the NDU Press,<sup>6</sup> Richard Gabriel examines the relation between the structure and the objectives of the military organization and concludes that the modern entre-

preneurial structure of the military is destroying the group cohesiveness necessary for combat effectiveness and that we must restore the pre-modern communal structure we so foolishly abandoned somewhere between Korea and Vietnam.

If Gabriel is correct in two critical assumptions, that for the military to fight effectively in time of war is an ethical objective and that military leaders ought to make efficient warriors out of whatever personnel society provides,<sup>7</sup> then the issue he raises is an ethical issue and the military organization is morally responsible for not only a failure of objective but also for the unethical actions its use of an inappropriate structure encourages on the part of its personnel.

If I may expand upon Gabriel while relieving him of responsibility for what follows, I doubt very much that anyone ever joined the military in time of peace solely because of love of country. Before Vietnam, during what Gabriel calls "the pre-modern" period, enlistees joined in quest for a home and the military structure then satisfied that desire. Once assigned to a unit your future friends, officers and duties were determined for years to come. If combat duty came, you fought for and because of your "buddies," a term that now smells of mothballs. Now new enlistees and officers join in search of skills that will serve them in future civilian careers and the military structure accommodates them by treating them like trainees and junior executives at IBM. To remain with one unit or one group of associates a year or longer is unusual. If combat duty comes, it is one of those unpleasant assignments but it, too, will not long endure. As an enlisted man, you try to stay alive until rotated. As an officer, you may do the same unless you view combat assignment as an opportunity for career advancement.



In which case you may try to meet production quotas established by like-minded superiors and, if clever, try to avoid being "fragged" by disgruntled subordinates.

I know from personal experience and the examples of close kin what it means to find a home in the Army, and I share with the DI in *An Officer and a Gentleman* contempt for those who join merely to acquire skills valued by the business world, but I still think Gabriel is wrong in believing that the good old days can be restored if the military structure will simply "take human raw material, change it [and] mold it."<sup>8</sup> To so conclude overlooks the fact that in those good old days the military structure had the much easier task of providing a home for those who entered wanting a home. It also overlooks the fact that within any formal organization the interplay between personnel and structure involves give and take between the motivations of individual members and the techniques of initiation, which is illustrated in the world of business today as junior members are resisting the entrepreneurial structure and its demands, are refusing to accept new assignments and locations, and are causing the structure to be modified accordingly. None of this, of course, should be taken to indicate that Gabriel is wrong in his negative criticism; the structure of a business corporation is not appropriate for the military organization and it does encourage, by rewarding it, unethical behavior.

According to Gabriel, the major reason the military should reject the entrepreneurial structure is that its objectives are in conflict with those proper for the military.<sup>9</sup> He assumes, in other words, that the structures of formal organizations are "function-specific"

and that the entrepreneurial structure is appropriate for its objectives. The only sense, however, in which the structure of any formal organization can be function-specific is the sense in which some structures may be more instrumentally effective than others in realizing certain objectives. But whether they are depends more upon the personnel than upon the structure itself. As we say in my world, a good teacher can teach well no matter how the learning situation is structured although good teaching is easier given certain structures.

We may seriously question, also, whether the entrepreneurial structure is appropriate even for the business world and its objectives. As it establishes a hierarchical order between top, middle and lower management, it creates competition for the higher ranks and tends to reward those who produce immediate profits. At the bottom of the same hierarchy is labor, in an adversarial relation to all of management, little concerned with corporate profits and much concerned with obtaining increases in wages and/or benefits. What this structure and the motivations it encourages have done to our own automobile and steel industries should indicate that a different structure, possibly one made in Japan, might be more effective even if all we seek is to maximize profits. My point is that those unconvinced by Gabriel, who still believe that the military should ape the objectives of business, should not rush headlong to the conclusion that, therefore, they should imitate the organizational structures of business.

Now that I have revealed most of my ethical and organizational biases, perhaps, my concluding evaluation of the ethical nature of the military organization will be at least more clear if not more

persuasive. As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>10</sup> the objective of the military organization is to exercise and manage violence to promote and preserve the safety and welfare of the human species and to do so inasmuch as possible in a manner consistent with the interests of the client-nation which sanctions this objective and the dignity and status of those who carry it out. This objective I believe is ethical for two reasons. First, as Elizabeth Anscombe has argued,<sup>11</sup> certain necessary human values require the existence of a stable, secure society and such a society cannot be maintained unless some social agency is authorized to restrain those who would disrupt that society. Secondly, the social agency authorized to restrain disruptive behavior must be allowed to exercise violence if necessary because there are those who will not cease their antisocial behavior unless deprived of liberty or life. It is this second point that is most critical. A *genuine* pacifist, by which I mean to exclude part-time pacifists who oppose only particular wars, would object that the most effective way to restrain and eliminate antisocial behavior is by love and would add that violence only gives rise to more violence. If we suppose, as genuine pacifists do, that there is in our universe a moral law at work which in the long run rewards all love with its increase and punishes all violence with greater violence, then the military objective is unethical. To protest that in the long run we will all be dead is beside the point because the genuine pacifist believes that death is an illusion.

In answer to genuine pacifism, all that can be said is that human experience weighs against its metaphysical assumptions and strongly supports the more pessimistic belief that some ultimate threats to basic human values can be countered only by the use

of violence. It should be obvious, however, that genuine pacifists do not constitute such threats and I see no good reason for punishing them for their beliefs.

To complete our external evaluation of the military organization we must ask whether the demands made upon it by the social environment are ethical. Inasmuch as the civilian world demands of the military organization that it carry out its obligation, as defined earlier, simple logic would require me to say that such a demand is ethical. It is when the civilian world makes demands concerning the manner in which this objective is to be carried out that ethical conflicts arise. Two examples may be sufficient.

Since the Korean War many parents and politicians have been saying, in effect, that they want the military organization to carry out its objective but don't use our children or the children of our supporters. Use instead the children of the poor, the uneducated and the disenfranchised. Quite apart from the harmful impact it has upon the effectiveness of the military organization, this demand is itself unethical. If, as argued earlier, the military objective is legitimate as essential to preserving basic human values, then to demand that it be pursued by those already deprived of such values is doubly wrong because, first, it denies the right of all persons to such values and, secondly, by using those so deprived of means to perpetuate the values of those served, it denies the humanity of those so used.

The second closely related demand made by the civilian world is that in carrying out its objective the military organization should do it anywhere but here.<sup>12</sup> Of course, testing and target ranges are needed, missiles must be placed somewhere, bases must be built and military personnel must be housed

but don't spoil my view, threaten my daughters or lower my property values! This demand, too, is an unethical attempt to gain benefits at the expense of others and accounts for the general uneasiness many civilians feel in the presence of military personnel. It is much easier to use others if you are not reminded of their humanity.

By reference to these unethical social demands, I will consider next whether the military organization is making appropriate adjustments to the prevailing social environment and will argue that although it is making expedient adjustments, these adjustments are unethical. When politicians in response to pressure from constituents forced the military to depend upon volunteers as personnel, the military response was, and has been, heroic and many officers almost succeed in convincing themselves that it was their idea in the first place. But heroic response to unethical demands does not make the response ethical. Acceptance of and adjustment to this social demand is not only unethical because it reinforces the society's denial of the rights and humanity of military personnel and its refusal to accept its obligation to share in the cost for preserving its values, but it is also unethical because, as Sam Sarkesian suggests,<sup>13</sup> it makes increasingly difficult the process of training and utilizing personnel and perpetuates the separation of civilian and military values. By adjusting to the demand for an all-volunteer membership, the military organization encourages the society to believe that society's demand that preparedness for military action be conducted with no disturbance to civilians is also legitimate. There is, I believe, a close relationship between the military's expedient response to both of these demands and the attractiveness of push-button

warfare to civilians and the military alike, an attractiveness that may prevent us from properly judging high-tech weaponry in terms of its military effectiveness or the capacity of military personnel to use it. What is even more sobering is that if these social demands increase because, in part, of the military's easy accommodation, the military organization may well be pushed into viewing the use of ultimate weapons as the only way to carry out its objectives.

Lest it be seen that by these comments I am questioning civilian control of the military, allow me to suggest that the very concept of civilian control was introduced in our nation to preserve democracy by preventing the military profession from usurping the powers of the state. As I have tried to argue, expedient accommodation to the social demands for an all-volunteer military organization and remote-control military operations is both undermining democracy and isolating the military profession from proper civilian influence. For the sake of perpetuating the values for which civilian control of the military was once the intended means, military leaders must resist these unethical social demands.

Perhaps I have made it sufficiently clear already that I do not believe that the personnel available to the military organization today are the best to realize its objectives and that I believe that all able citizens should share the military task of preserving our basic values. Short of a situation generally perceived to be a national emergency, it may be impossible to institute compulsory military service which would provide personnel better qualified and require that the military task be an equitable obligation. But even if such an ideal is impossible, we have an ethical duty to push toward it as much as possible and to criticize present

methods of recruiting personnel which not only place an unjust burden of service on the socially deprived but an equally unjust burden of service upon those professionals in the military who are most conscientious. Military professionals responsible for training and devising training programs and for anticipating possible combat situations face even greater responsibilities, given inadequate personnel, and such responsibilities weigh most heavily upon those professionals most sincerely committed to the military objective, who are precisely those we cannot afford to lose whether by attrition or resignation.

Our final question is whether the military organization's structure is appropriate to its personnel and the realization of its objective. As argued earlier, the structure of a formal organization is not function-specific in the sense in which the selection of a structure will determine without regard to personnel that the objective will be realized. As also indicated earlier, this question can be considered in either ideal or practical terms, that is, we may consider it in terms of ideal personnel and ideal structure or in terms of actual personnel and actual structure. I have suggested that the actual personnel of the military organization is inadequate because it does not represent equitably all social classes, specifically, it overrepresents the poor and uneducated. Thus, I have described the actual personnel and the personnel who would be more ideal.

What remains, then, is to describe the military organization's actual and ideal structure. Viewed in the abstract, its actual structure is, as Huntington has described it,<sup>14</sup> bureaucratic and corporate. It serves its clients not on a one-to-one basis but as one collective unit serving another collective unit. Within this

bureaucratic structure assignments are determined by rank rather than by demonstrated ability. The structure is corporate because it is bureaucratic. Military professionals have a sense of unity and separateness from clients because they work together as a collective unit serving a collective whole rather than selected individuals.

Viewed in context, this structure varies according to the motivations of its personnel and its responses to the social environment. The degree of variation, however, is limited by the abstract structure. Military officers, as Gabriel says, may act from time to time like junior IBM executives on the make, but betraying the Corps and betraying IBM are still quite different actions, ethically and practically. The nation can survive if IBM goes out of business and both the nation and IBM can survive if IBM's executives move to Sperry-Rand. Military officers, as Gabriel wants, may act from time to time like Jesuits training monastic initiates, but serving God is not the same as serving citizens who want peace and security. The restraining of the enemies of God can await a final judgment and God's militia does not depend upon Congressional appropriations.

Because it is shaped by the needs of the clients served the abstract structure of the military organization is appropriate, at least in its broad outlines, to the realization of the military objective. But, in context, that is, given differing personnel and responses to the society served, that same structure can allow and even encourage unethical behavior. For example, as mentioned, because the military serves clients as one collective unit to another military professionals are separated from society. Thus, it is easier for such professionals to give in to a social demand for greater



remoteness in values and operations than to resist it. Because in the military assignments are determined by rank rather than demonstrated ability it is easier for officers to aim at achieving rank and pleasing those of superior rank rather than the realization of the military objective and to do so especially when most incoming personnel have little reason to be concerned with the needs of the client-state. Such behavior, however, would not be reduced by simply making changes in the abstract structure. Any such change, rather, would make more difficult the realization of the military objective, even given ideal personnel. If citizens had to be consulted individually concerning the conduct of military operations, Washington would still be on the wrong side of the Delaware. If respect for rank were to be replaced by respect for ability, Patton would have invaded Austria and, assuming that ability can be recognized by those who do not possess it, commanders would have to preface orders with a presentation of credentials.

If unethical behavior within the military organization is to be reduced, and here I summarize my intended thesis, the military organization must change its personnel and its responses to the social environment so that within the existing structure there is a greater commitment to the military objective. Personnel can be changed by replacement or retraining. In the case of the military, retraining actual personnel cannot overcome the inequities created by the social demand for an all-volunteer force. That demand must be resisted and among recruits and officers alike there must be a broader cross-section of all social classes. Present and incoming officers must be made aware of the ethical justifications of the military objective. Political considerations change and social motivations fluctuate but

regardless of such variations the basic human values, such as family and home, gainful occupation and self-realization, require a society, the ultimate guarantor of whose security is the military profession. Unless this is accepted, no other reason for being a military officer will provide the commitment necessary.

#### NOTES

1. John Ladd, "Morality and the Ideal of Rationality in Formal Organizations," in *Ethical Issues in Business*, ed. Thomas Donaldson and Patricia Werhane (Englewood, Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1979), 102-106.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 110-112.
3. This case is based on "The Ferdana Company," prepared by Robert J. Dran (Boston: Intercollegiate Case Clearing House, 1972).
4. Kenneth Goodpaster, "Morality and Organizations," in *Ethical Issues in Business*, pp. 117-118.
5. W.K. Frankena, *Ethics* (Prentice-Hall, 1973), Chap. 3.
6. Richard A. Gabriel, "Modernism vs. Pre-Modernism: The Need to Rethink the Basis of Military Organizational Forms," in *Military Ethics and Professionalism*, ed. James Brown and Michael J. Collins, (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1981), 55-74.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-72.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
10. Manuel M. Davenport, "Professionals or Hired Guns?" *Army*, 30 (May 1980), pp. 13-14.

11. Elizabeth Anscombe, "War and Murder," in *War, Morality and the Military Profession*, ed. Malham M. Wakin (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1979), pp. 285-287.

12. Cf. "Professionals or Hired Guns?" pp. 13-14.

13. Sam C. Sarkesian, "Moral and Ethical Foundations of Military Professionalism," *Military Ethics and Professionalism*, pp. 2, 20.

14. Samuel P. Huntington, "Officership as a Profession," *War, Morality and the Military Profession*, pp. 20-22.

*Charles W. Hudlin*

## MORALITY AND THE MILITARY PROFESSION: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

**T**HE FAMOUS BATTLE OF HASTINGS between Harold, the Saxon King of England, and Duke William of Normandy took place in the year 1066. This battle demonstrates how important technology was to war, even 900 years ago. For in this battle a seemingly insignificant technological innovation proved to be the decisive factor in the battle. Both sides knew of its existence, but only the Normans employed it. This device had been employed by soldiers hundreds of years earlier; however, the Saxons failed to realize its possibilities. In fact the device had been perfected in France over the previous hundred years. At mid-morning the Normans advanced. The plan was to break the shield wall formed by the English with a cavalry charge covered by a hail of arrows from their bowmen. Nevertheless, the Normans were

---

Major Charles W. Hudlin, USAF, Associate Professor of Philosophy at the US Air Force Academy, presented this essay at the Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, January 1982. The essay is reprinted from the US Air Force Academy *Journal of Professional Military Ethics*, December 1982.

thrown back with the defensive force of spears and axes. In mid-afternoon the Normans staged a similar attack; once again the shield wall of the English repelled the attack. However, this time the English made a fatal mistake; they chased their attacker down the hill onto level ground. As the Normans realized what had happened, they turned on their pursuers, stood up in their stirrups (the device that allowed them to use their lances effectively) and in the words of one historian, "... the Norman Cavalry Shock-troop went through the English mass like a hot knife through butter."<sup>1</sup> It is lessons from history such as this that serve to remind us of the constant need to bring intelligence, imagination, and innovation to the tactics and strategy of war. When military leaders fail to exercise such competence, soldiers die, battles are lost, and nations fall. Given these high stakes, the responsibility to be technically competent may be the first moral responsibility of military commanders and supervisors. However, technical incompetence is not the only source of an army's failure to function properly. One finding of the now well-publicized Army War College Study in 1970 was that ethical misconduct and incompetence were related in such a way that the failure in one leads to failure in the other.<sup>2</sup> Assuming this is so, then soldiers die, battles are lost, and nations fall just as surely from moral incompetence as from technical incompetence. Given this close connection between morality and competence, and given that the writings of military professionals, and others, provide an accurate picture of the moral climate of the military services, then there is apparently some cause for concern; for these writers continually document failures in personal integrity, overconcern with image, careerism, and

misplaced loyalty as typifying daily activity of military life.

What has produced this unhappy circumstance for the profession of arms? No doubt a number of factors, some of which I will comment on later, but one we might consider concerns the possibility that the high technology of modern warfare has made the need for ethical commitment less obvious than it once was. At the end of World War II General Patton was asked by a group of reporters to comment on the following statement:

We've been told about the wonder weapons the Germans were working on, long-range rockets, push-button bombing, weapons that don't need soldiers. General Patton is said to have replied: Wonder weapons? My God I don't see the wonder in them. Killing without heroics, nothing is glorified, nothing is reaffirmed. No heroes, no cowards, no troops, no generals. Only those who are left alive and those who are left dead. I am glad I won't live to see it.<sup>3</sup>

Probably none of us will live to see the General's worst fears fully realized, but there has already been a tremendous advancement in the technology of warfare. The modern soldier is commonly found in missile silos, computer rooms, engineering labs, management teams, personnel offices, finance centers, and so forth. Many of the television recruiting commercials for the services emphasize this fact. The appeal is not to enter the military service because it is a noble or good thing to do, but to enter because it will prepare a young man or woman for a technical occupation in civilian life. I think that this expectation, along with the technical requirements of soldiering in today's military, makes it difficult for these soldiers to comprehend the difference between

what they are doing in the military and what they might do for IBM. As General Patton observed a number of years ago, it is not easy to perceive this technical activity, even in the military environment, as heroic or as affirming values. So, while the argument for integrity in the military profession based on the nature of war is no less valid than it ever was, perhaps it has become psychologically less appealing to the modern soldier. I recall a conversation with an Army sergeant who was a member of the component command in Japan. He related to me how he had been forced to engage in hand-to-hand combat with the Viet Cong because the supply system had failed to resupply his unit with ammunition. It struck me then, as it still does, how tremendously varied the duties of a modern soldier might be. This particular soldier was rigorously trained in combat so that he could engage in hand-to-hand combat and win, and now he sat in my class learning to employ the programs of a third-generation computer to plan for a future joint military operation. There are two points to be made here. First, this man, and others like him, understands very well the moral implications of a failure to perform military duty, and second, he understands these implications in a way most modern soldiers never will. What is apparently needed is some way to instill in the modern, technologically oriented soldier a keen sense of duty. In the Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics (JSCOPE) III it was decided that the only people who can really solve this problem are military commanders. I want to explore institutional possibilities for assisting commanders with this problem, but, first, let me say a bit more about the problem.

Earlier I listed several of the moral deficiencies of the military profession commonly cited by the pro-

fessional literature. I now want to list more specifically what these are. One Army chaplain states:

All decisions, practices, goals, and values of the entire institutional structure which make ethical behavior difficult should be examined, beginning with the following: First, blatant or subtle forms of ethical relativism which blur the issue of what is right or wrong, or which bury it as a subject of little or no importance. Second, the exaggerated loyalty syndrome, where people are afraid to tell the truth and are discouraged from it. Third, the obsession with image, where people are not even interested in the truth. And last, the drive for success, in which ethical sensitivity is bought off or sold because of the personal need to achieve.<sup>4</sup>

In an article in *Air University Review* an Air Force lieutenant colonel makes these comments:

While the Chief emphasizes increased concern for the welfare of our people to promote greater productivity, many individual leaders seem to parrot the right words while they seek to fill the right squares in the right jobs to impress the right people in the right places at the right time. Our more perceptive personnel, especially the younger ones, who are more adept at reading body language, see through the double standard shown and lose faith in the integrity of the leader.<sup>5</sup>

This colonel further reports that at a commanders' conference, when challenged to be completely honest, a commander remarked, "Commanders are not martyrs. We did not make it this far by telling it like it really is."<sup>6</sup> Not one of the remaining 34 commanders challenged this statement. In their book *Crisis in Command*, Gabriel and Savage accused the Army of adopting "a new ethical code rooted in the entrepreneurial model of the modern business corporation."<sup>7</sup> All of these comments might be summarized as a general



accusation charging that the traditional military values of integrity, duty, and selflessness have degenerated to the point where today self-interest and careerism are dominant values in the contemporary military.

If I were to make an appraisal about the state of honor in the military profession strictly from my own experience. I would have to admit that, while there is some truth to these claims, I personally have never been asked to do anything I considered unethical. However, I do know people who have. One case I know of involved two units employing and exercising a new automated weapons system. Unit A could not make the system work and so continued to operate manually. Unit B reported that the system worked well. So, the commander of Unit A, fearing an unfavorable comparison with Unit B, required his personnel to submit false reports concerning the reliability of the weapons system. In another case a unit commander pressured a young lieutenant to falsify a security investigation in order to cover for a friend. In still another instance, while I was observing two of the Air Force Academy's Honor Representatives brief a group of liaison officers, one of the officers, an Air Force major, made this comment, "I think that the Honor Code you have here at the Academy is just fine; it is exactly what you need here. However, when you get out in the Air Force, you may have to learn to tolerate." This comment was followed by another officer's, "Yes, remember, you can only fall on your sword once." My perception is that most junior officers believe these comments are correct. In addition, I continually hear reports from cadets returning from summer programs, which involve them in the activities of Air Force units, where they often see

breaches of integrity. Apparently, they often get a poor impression of Air Force members.

I suppose that, given all of this, one might jump to the conclusion that ethical problems in the military are at an epidemic proportion. I doubt that this is so. However, ethical problems have reached the point at which they are certainly troublesome. If nothing else, they seem to affect our confidence in ourselves. I don't believe that I can provide a method of solving these problems that will ensure that the level of integrity in the armed forces will reach a new height, but I do think that progress can be made in winning support for ethical standards. It seems to me that there is room for improvement by military institutions in three areas. First, I believe there is a certain kind of institutional pressure in the military that encourages officers to go beyond healthy ambition. Second, there is no clearly stated and promulgated ethical standard; and third, there is no well-thought-out ethics education program. Naturally the comments that follow are based on my experience and observations in the Air Force. So, what I have to say may not apply to the other services, although I think that it will, at least in concept.

First, what is the nature of this pressure that induces many officers to move from healthy ambition to what might be described as blind ambition? Officially it is called career management. It is backed by the "up-or-out" promotion system, and it looks, on the surface, like a benign, efficient method by which to engage talented people in fair competition to fulfill career goals and ensure the right people are promoted to the right rank and job. It may actually accomplish these objectives in many cases. But I am quite certain

that this system also produces unhealthy and, therefore, undesirable side effects. Officers are constantly encouraged to engage in what often look like ticket-punching exercises and square-filling projects. We must attend the right schools, pursue the right jobs, work for the right endorsements, avoid low promotion career fields, etc. There is nothing wrong with career advancement, but all too often career advancement is manifested as careerism where the real aim is to game the system in order to create a good record for a promotion board, rather than earnestly try to do a good job and allow promotion to follow as a matter of course. And is this so surprising? What is at stake for each officer at a promotion board (at least up to the grade of O5) is not merely a promotion or self-image, but a career, a life's work. I have talked to a number of officers who express great relief when they make this promotion. They tell me that it is not the thought of working less or being less dedicated than they once were that bothers them, but that this promotion provides relief from a coercive system. So now, should they feel that their commander is asking them to do something they consider either stupid or unethical, there is not the coercive threat of a death blow to a career that there once was. Many captains and majors I have talked with express this same sentiment as they look forward to the promotion that marks a successful career and basically guarantees a complete career. In Vietnam the officers who most often refused to obey orders they considered either stupid or unethical were not the career professionals, but the reserve officers who were not career minded.<sup>8</sup> Should we conclude from this that reserve officers are persons of greater integrity than career officers? I think not. The difference is that the reserve officer

could not be so easily coerced by the threat of a bad effectiveness report. The reserve officer did not have so much at stake.

If it is true, and I think that it is, that the up-or-out system is the underlying cause of the pressure to conform in situations where protest is proper, then what should the services do? I think the services may have to decide what they want most. The present promotion system has proved to be an effective means of control and perhaps has provided necessary healthy competition in many cases. However, if I and others who think this way are correct, then the system has also produced a great deal of pressure to conform to or even initiate unethical activities. Remember the liaison officer who said to an Honor Representative that "you can only fall on your sword once." It is so easy to rationalize away each small unethical act as relatively unimportant and to think that it is not worth risking a bad effectiveness report over, until a life-long habit of rationalization begins to guide all such decisions. Perhaps it is too much to ask of morally good people that they risk a career to uphold a standard, even one they believe in. After all, how many of us are made of the stuff of martyrs? Recall the remark of the commander who said, "Commanders are not martyrs. We did not make it this far by telling it like it really is." What is needed here is a safe avenue of protest, or perhaps the whole promotion system needs to be reconsidered in light of its true cost.

The second factor, which I earlier suggested affects moral integrity in the services, is the absence of a clearly stated and well-promulgated ethical standard. If this sounds like a call for a military code of ethics, that's because it is. This suggestion proved to be quite

unpopular at JSCOPE III when proposed by Professor Richard Gabriel, but I want to examine the issue of a written code a bit further. In general, I think that it would be a good thing for the military profession to state what its standards are, just as in 1955 President Eisenhower placed into effect the Code of Conduct. This code was to serve as the moral standard for soldiers in combat, and especially for prisoners of war. What is needed is a similar code which embodies the ethics of everyday situations which commanders would be charged to uphold. Let us examine some of the standard objections to a written code. It is often argued that there is an unwritten code and it is this code which is transmitted by the practice of the senior members of the profession. And, further, that even if there was a written code, it would still be the practice of senior members that actually communicates the real code. No doubt this is true, but I fail to see how this diminishes the value of a written code. A written standard provides guidance to senior as well as junior members of the military and is a measure of the mentors as well as the "mentees." It would also be easier for the senior members of the profession to call attention to the standards if they were written. Another objection to the idea of a written code is that the written code may create more problems than it solves because there would be a thousand interpretations of it. This argument is quite puzzling. If it is meant that the written code will be subject to various interpretations while the unwritten code will not, then this is indeed very curious. What sort of immunity from numerous interpretations is it that an unwritten code enjoys that a written code does not? If the unwritten code can be spoken, then it too, just like a written code, can be

misinterpreted or interpreted in various ways. If it is true that there will be a thousand interpretations of a written code, then we must be a thousand times worse off without it because there will be a thousand interpretations of a thousand different unwritten codes. Now, just what is the unwritten code? I think that a real case could be made that at least one of the unwritten codes is the following: "It's a dog-eat-dog world; you've got to look out for yourself because no one else will. Take care of yourself first, your friends, and your boss." I can't recall how many times I heard the first Air Force officer that I worked for, a lieutenant colonel, tell me, "You've got to look out for old number one." Unwritten codes like this have led me to believe that it would be useful for the services to adopt a written statement of professional ethics. Presently, these unwritten codes go unchallenged by any official ethic. Generally, the most forceful argument against a written code is that it is impossible to enforce. That is, if anyone is thinking of administering the code with honor courts or honor boards, then that is just impractical. With this argument I am in complete agreement. After working closely with the Honor Code at the Air Force Academy, both its instruction and administration, and observing the difficulties associated with the administrative process, I fear that any attempt to similarly administer a code on a vastly expanded scale would end in an administrative nightmare. Notice that granting the merits of this argument does not show that a code is either useless or impossible, but only indicates that there are limits on how a code could be enforced. Perhaps a more realistic way to encourage support for professional ethics is to evaluate an officer's performance in this area as the Air Force presently evaluates

AD-A187 042

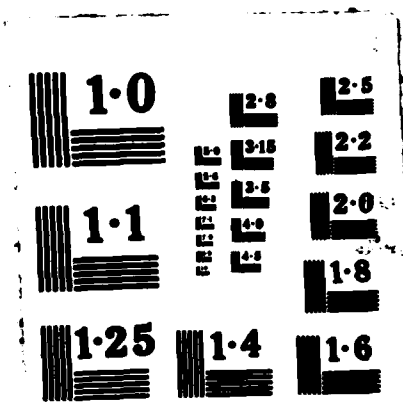
MILITARY ETHICS: REFLECTIONS ON PRINCIPLES - THE  
PROFESSION OF ARMS MILIT. (U) NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIV  
WASHINGTON DC M M MARIN ET AL. SEP 87

2/3

UNCLASSIFIED

F/G 5/9

NL





human relations skills, and that is to include the evaluation on the effectiveness report. My real interest in having a written code is not, however, for the purpose of enforcement, but of enlightenment. This, then, brings us to the third area which I identified as a problem area for the military institution, ethics education.

As I reflect on my own ethical training in the military, there is very little to reflect on. At Officers' Training School, which I attended nine years ago, I recall a great deal of instruction on drill and ceremonies, communication, leadership, management concepts, and Air Force organization, but I don't recall a single lesson on ethics, although I am sure there must have been at least one. One is exactly what I recall from Squadron Officers' School (a three-month school for junior officers). Currently, there is no ongoing ethics education program in the Air Force as there is for human relations, drugs, and alcohol abuse. Both West Point and the Air Force Academy teach a single ethics course as part of their core curriculum. I believe that an independent assessment, by anyone who understands the complexity of the subject, would require officer candidates to know more about ethical decisions and particular ethical dilemmas than a one-semester course at an Academy or its equivalent in officer training programs elsewhere. One contemporary psychologist states:

But if the movement to teach ethics is serious about developing not only the capacity to think ethically but also the commitment to act ethically, then it will have to find ways to fire the will as well as the intellect, to engage the heart as deeply as the mind, and to put will, intellect, and feeling to the test of behavior. Armchairing alone won't do

the job. Engaging and developing the whole person is unquestionably a tall order, more than any one-semester course can do adequately, perhaps more than many educational institutions are prepared to tackle, but that, from the standpoint of moral psychology, is the size of the task.<sup>9</sup>

The point is that the military services have never really made a well-planned and comprehensive attempt to provide soldiers an education in ethics. I don't mean to fault them for this because, in times past, perhaps there was no real reason to think they should. But given present circumstances, there is now. In an interview after Watergate, John Dean was asked:

Do you think that the outcome of your career might have been different had the law school focused on the questions of professional responsibility to a greater extent?" He replied, "No, I don't think so. I must say that I knew that the things I was doing were wrong, and one learns the difference between right and wrong long before one enters law school. A course in legal ethics wouldn't have changed anything."<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps John Dean should have taken a course in ethics, and then he might not have made this comment. If he had taken a course in ethics, he would have learned that in most courses at least there is no attempt to teach a student right from wrong, at least not in the ordinary sense. What most university ethics courses teach is ethical theory and moral dilemma resolution. This amounts to trying to understand what makes a right act right or a wrong act wrong and then applying whatever moral insight is obtained through this study to some difficult moral questions. I suspect that what John Dean meant when he said that he knew right from wrong was that he knew it was against the rules to do what he did. Knowing that

some act violates a rule, and understanding the validity of the rule and believing in it and the point of view that backs it up are two different things. Consider the things you tell your children about morality. What rules do you recommend to them? Do you merely tell them the rules or do you attempt to provide an explanation of the importance of the rules? It seems obvious to me that the explanation of why right is right and wrong is wrong is as important as the rule itself. This is what ethics courses typically explore. I cannot say for certain that if John Dean had taken an ethics course, even a good one, he would not have behaved as he did, but neither should he say, as he does, that it would have made no difference. The point is, if explanation and justification are taken to be important in gaining allegiance to a moral standard, then ethics education can be a valuable part of professional training.

One might ask: What would a credible ethics education program look like? I think that the service academies should require at least two courses: a basic course in ethical theory followed by a problems course focusing on moral problems relevant to the military profession. This will allow time to adequately cover both topics whereas a single course does not. Further, the courses could be spaced at least a year apart. Some studies indicate that there is a "sleeping effect" following a course in ethics. This means that the effects of the course do not show up in student thinking or behavior until a year later. By spacing the courses out in this manner, the second course could better take advantage of that effect, plus whatever natural maturing might also take place in students. A comparable program could be worked out for other

commissioning programs. Beyond this, there needs to be an ongoing program aimed at continuous ethics education for all service members. I think that there are some parallels between the need for an ethics program and the need that existed in the Air Force ten years ago for a social actions program. In 1971 the Chief of Staff of the Air Force established a functional area to address problems of race relations and drug and alcohol abuse. This move was made in response to the civil rights movement and the "now generation," both of which had a significant impact on the attitudes of persons entering the military service in the sixties and seventies. The perception was that an immediate and, hopefully, well-thought-out counterattack was in order. The result was the social actions program.<sup>11</sup> Haven't there been similar phenomena with regard to ethical attitudes? Whether we call it the "now generation," the "me generation," or whatever, the attitudes of young people towards the traditional military values are not what they once were. I have seen the following experiment conducted several times. An Honor Representative at the Academy is teaching fourth classmen a lesson about the Honor Code. He asks, "How many of you cheated in high school?" Inevitably 95% of them will hold up their hand. Just as inevitably, the group with their hands up accuse the others of lying. The declaration is that "everyone cheats in high school." The simple virtues of honesty as required by the Honor Code are a drastic change for most new cadets. It seems clear to me that a major counterattack is called for here, that a functional area needs to be established within each service to develop an initial and an ongoing ethics education program that will address the moral issues and conflicts of the military profession.

---

It seems that the Army has already taken a step in this direction with the establishment of the Ethics Division at the Soldiers Support Center. Perhaps some sort of joint service task force should be established to develop a program that could then be tailored and administered by each service to suit its own needs.

Let me now briefly summarize the ground I have covered. The basic assumption was that only commanders and supervisors can make significant changes in the military. This is true whether we are talking about moral development or dress codes. The question then posed was, what can the military institution do to help commanders and supervisors ensure high moral standards are maintained? My answer is three things. First, the institution can take the pressure off by providing a safe avenue of dissent over moral issues, and this may mean modifying the promotion system's up-or-out policy. Second, adopt a written ethical standard similar to the Code of Conduct so that the ethical requirements of the military profession will be clear, uniform, and well promulgated. Finally, create an office of primary responsibility for ethics education. If these actions are taken, it seems to me that we could anticipate, in the long term, significant improvement in the moral climate of the military services. If some substantial effort is not adopted, which will certainly include an investment of manpower and money, I fear that we may find ourselves like the Saxons, being hacked to pieces by the Normans, not because they thought to use a stirrup when we didn't, but because our moral failures, along with our lack of personal integrity, destroyed the overall integrity of the American military establishment as a fighting force.

## NOTES

1. James Burke, *Connections* (Boston, Mass.: Brown and Company, 1979), p. 51.
2. Malham M. Wakin, "Ethics of Leadership," in Malham M. Wakin, ed., *War, Morality, and the Military Profession* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1979), p. 210.
3. According to the movie, *Patton*.
4. Chaplin Kermit D. Johnson (Colonel), "Ethical Issues of Military Leadership," in *Parameters*, vol. IV, no. 2, 1974, pp. 35-39.
5. Raymond F. Hamel (Lt. Col.), "Are Professionalism and Integrity only a Myth," in *Air University Review*, vol. XXIX, May-June 1978, pp. 60-67.
6. Ibid.
7. Richard A. Gabriel and Paul L. Savage, *Crisis in Command* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), p. 17.
8. Ibid.
9. Thomas Likona, "What Does Moral Psychology Have to Say to the Teacher of Ethics?" in Daniel Callahan and Sissela Bok, eds., *Ethics Teaching in Higher Education* (New York: Plenum Press, 1980), p. 132.
10. Ibid., p. 129.
11. Reginald P. Gibson (Lt. Col.) and Joseph H. Puzo (Maj.) "Social Actions Programs," in an Air War College course book, *USAF Personnel Management*, vol. I, ch. 14, pp. 27-34.

*Part III*

**ETHICAL  
PRACTICES**



*Richard A. Gabriel*

## LEGITIMATE AVENUES OF MILITARY PROTEST IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

**T**HE EXPERIENCE of the American Army during 10 years of conflict in Indochina produced a series of behavioral deficiencies which seem almost endemic to the military structure itself. Among the most important of these was a military careerism so exaggerated that protection and advancement of an officer's relative career position, at all levels, became the highest operant value for a substantial number of officers. This metamorphosis of military values was not without its practical effects on the operational capabilities of the Army itself. In general, however, the change in the career value structure resulted in a series of moral and ethical failures defined in terms of officers acquiescing, initiating, or participating in policies and actions which individually they regarded

---

Dr. Richard A. Gabriel, Professor of Politics at St. Anselm's College in Manchester, New Hampshire, has authored a number of books, including *Crisis in Command*, a study of the American Army in the Vietnam era, and *To Serve With Honor*. This article is reprinted from the US Air Force Academy *Journal of Professional Military Ethics*, April 1980.



as unethical, but which were followed as the way to career advancement. Further, there is no reason to believe that this lapse in military ethics has been corrected.

Why did this situation occur? Why did the officer corps allow itself to participate in a series of "Vietnam horrors" contrary to the stated ethos of "duty, honor, and country"? It seems clear that the exaggerated emphasis upon careerism to the point of acquiescing in almost every policy without opposition could only have happened in a military structure which has consistently failed to develop an ethical doctrine of resistance. Thus, such shorthand injunctions as "it all counts for twenty," "don't rock the boat," "you can't tell the general that," while clearly dysfunctional from an ethical and operational point of view, actually become very functional doctrines for individual career advancement. To be sure such advancement then becomes purchased at the expense of failure to question higher orders virtually regardless of operational consequences. In the end, the Vietnam era witnessed the development of an officer corps whose members acquiesced in policies, orders, and actions that many strongly disagreed with from a personal moral perspective but supported nevertheless as a means of career advancement.

The extent of the problem is obvious and embarrassing. In 10 years of warfare, not a single general officer resigned in protest over the policies conducted in Vietnam; indeed, we cannot find a single instance where a general officer refused, by way of resignation, to execute a single policy, although it now appears in retrospect that several of them may have had serious reservations about the effectiveness of some of these policies. Alternatively, despite evidence that

specific policies were failing and had been failing for years, not only did no resignations occur but apparently neither did any senior officers protest. Moreover, we cannot locate a single colonel or lieutenant colonel who chose to resign. In fact, the only examples of resignation or protest seemed to have occurred at the lower levels of the officer corps and even then only rarely. There are, of course, a few examples of officers actually refusing to execute specific orders here and there, but such behavior was largely sporadic and in almost all cases confined to junior officers who were not career officers but OCS and ROTC graduates who were in "for two and go." In the end, it is difficult to escape the impression that resistance and protest, or even criticism, as moral alternatives to acquiescing in orders that an officer seriously disagreed with, were not established practices during the Vietnam conflict.

If the Army is ever to recover from the debacle of Vietnam, it must first undergo a "moral renaissance" as an essential precondition for further operational rebuilding. Among its first priorities must be to ensure that its officers develop the capacity to balance moral and career considerations more responsibly. Such a capacity is required at all rank levels, but most certainly at the general officer level where the ears of the policy makers are more readily available. Accordingly, it is imperative that the Army develop a doctrine of moral protest for use by the officer corps. It is beyond question that such a doctrine must be consistent in theory and in practice with the values of a democratic society and continued civilian control of the military apparatus. Any doctrine violating these basic precepts would be unacceptable and dangerous,

tending to provide the justification for a possible coup d'état.

What, then, are the morally permissible avenues of protest for the military officer consistent with the democratic values of American society and civilian control of the military? Are there courses of action a military officer may properly take when faced with the problem of being ordered to execute or acquiesce in policies which he personally and morally finds unacceptable? Four courses of action seem open, all consistent with the basic precepts already discussed. These courses of action are (1) resignation; (2) request for relief in protest; (3) appealing orders to higher command; (4) refusal to execute an order. None of these alternatives conflict with the military tradition of Western civilization. Since none are inherently associated with collective resistance, nothing of the menace of a coup d'état can be associated with any of these alternatives. It is important to observe that the American Army has never developed, nor has it made an effort to develop, any doctrine of moral resistance to immoral or ethically unacceptable orders.<sup>1</sup> It was precisely in this official moral vacuum that the exaggerated value of careerism could operate with such compulsion in Vietnam.

**I. Resignation.** The most obvious ways in which a military officer may demonstrate his disagreement with, or moral outrage toward, official policy is simply to resign in protest. Further, resignation can be accompanied by a public declaration as to the reason impelling him to resign, thus exposing the policy in question to public scrutiny and debate. Such a course of action is perfectly consistent with democratic

values and in no way challenges civilian control of the military structure. Moreover, in a practical way, resignation presents evidence to the "system" that policies may be in serious error, and to that extent dissent may increase system "rationality."

Resignation is almost always a more powerful tool when used by a general officer. Indeed, being the most effective means that a general officer can employ, since he is likely to be closer to the policy making level than his subordinates, his resignation can be expected to have the greater impact on policy. Practically, of course, the general officer risks little in the way of career benefits by his resignation as he is not asked to terminate his career in midstream as might be the case with a junior officer and takes his retirement benefits with him. Confronted with a policy that is morally objectionable, the general officer easily has the best chance of making his objections felt through resignation because he has the ear of the policy makers or can usually get to them. At the same time, he is identified in the public mind as a powerful figure whose resignation would have high publicity impact and ultimately he relinquishes only terminal career goals. He will surely fail to make chief of staff.

Drawing on the doctrine of *respondeat superior*, it may even be argued that the general officer, because of his superior position in the authority structure of the Army, has a greater moral obligation to act than does the junior officer simply because of his position, which carries with it a stronger moral charge to see to the welfare of his subordinates and those he has sworn to serve.<sup>2</sup> In any event, resignation, while surely an appropriate course of action for all officers, cannot reasonably be expected to occur in large numbers among the junior officer corps except in ex-

treme cases. In the first place, it is unrealistic to expect junior officers to forgo career goals midway in the process of attaining them and, most important, the resignation of junior officers, unless done in mass, is likely to have only limited, if any, effect on policy. Accordingly, what is needed are additional avenues of military protest which are available to the bulk of the officer corps below the general level.

**II. Request for Relief in Protest.** We have already argued that below the general officer level resignation will not be terribly common nor effective under present conditions. Yet, this does not relieve the junior officer from his obligation to take action in the face of policies he considers immoral.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, when confronted with "local" policies or orders which are morally objectionable, an officer *must be provided* with an option to effectuate a moral choice. Confronted with immoral local policies or orders—shooting prisoners and civilians, burning of civilian dwellings, poisoning of wells, etc.—an officer has the moral option to request formally that he be relieved of participating in such practices by requesting a transfer. Such an action, taking place in writing as well as orally, immediately engages the Army bureaucracy and has the effect of creating a written record as well as bringing the case to the attention of superior command and staff. This creates a set of circumstances in which the junior officer has discharged his obligation to himself and to the Army by making known improper practices to his superiors. At the very least, this course of action reduces the possibility that a superior can hide behind the doctrine of plausible

denial by claiming that he did not know what was going on in the field.<sup>4</sup>

To be sure, not all requests for transfer will be granted. Yet, if the issue raised is truly one of illegality or severe immorality, experience with the military bureaucracy suggests that the request will not be blocked at the lower levels. Rather, in an effort to avoid making a difficult decision, we suspect that a tendency toward upward buck-passing will develop so that such requests will be transmitted rapidly up the chain of command. This is in contrast to the "normal" transfer request in which no moral issue is raised, which tends to be handled at the lowest level possible. In any case, a request for transfer on the ground that local policies are immoral or illegal does provide an officer with a viable and feasible mechanism for exercising his moral obligations consistent with his relative position within the military hierarchy.

**III. Appeal Orders to a Higher Command.** The assumption in any military structure, especially one as dedicated to democratic values as our own, is that illegal or immoral orders will not be deliberately issued as a matter of official policy. To be sure, a local commander may overtly or covertly condone and encourage the torturing of prisoners, such a "policy" being directly local and not the official policy of the Army per se. This distinction opens up still another avenue that an officer may choose in effectuating a moral position whose object is the changing of a practice or policy which he regards as immoral. An officer confronted with a moral dilemma may legitimately take the additional step of "going over the head" of his superiors as a formal means of protest. Whereas

the object of such a choice is clearly to bring to the attention of higher authorities the practices and policies which are morally objectionable in the hope that they will be changed, the directed charge is clearly that the immediate ordering commander is exceeding his authority by formulating policies or ordering activities which his superiors would not permit if they knew about them.

To some minor extent, the military does provide for this alternative through the office of the Inspector General. However, such protests through this office are often officious, bureaucratic, and slow, not to mention evoking a feeling of disloyalty. The recommendation is that the concerned officer go to the relevant superior within the chain of command. Conventional military wisdom implies that remedial action will take place relatively rapidly, a fact that can be of great importance if the policy objected to is the torturing of prisoners or the shooting of civilians. Some evidence suggests, however, that these remedies are often neutralized by the compulsion to "team playing." Even so, a determined officer has avenues of redress if he chooses to pay the career price.

**IV. Refusal.** To this point, an attempt has been made to delineate possible avenues of moral protest available to the military officer consistent with the practical difficulties involved. Yet, the stress on the ease or difficulty with which a given course of action may or may not be implemented should not obscure the basic point, namely, a moral obligation not discharged in the face of practical difficulties remains no less a moral obligation. Inescapably, there is likely to come a point when the military officer has either

attempted to effect change in other more practical ways ("don't resign; stay in and change the system") or realized that the costs of implementing his moral imperative become ruinous to his career. In such a set of circumstances, the obligation remains.

In any situation of obligation and obedience, the ultimate response that a military officer can make to orders requiring actions that the individual considers morally wrong or illegal is the ultimate right to refuse to carry them out. Such an action is clearly the last resort and a response to extreme moral pressures, and is further premised upon the assumption that the individual is willing to accept the consequences of his act if it is later judged to have been wrong.<sup>5</sup>

The refusal to carry out an order issued by a legitimate authority is *prima facie* an illegal act, although not an immoral one. Further, refusal to obey is a way to effectuate a moral choice, not only immediately by the singular act of disobeying, but also in another way. Any refusal to obey an order immediately engages the military's legal conflict resolution structure, namely, the court-martial, in much the same way that the technical violation of a civil law engages the civilian courts, which then become the mechanism for having the law that was disobeyed judged definitively in terms of its application. The engagement of the court-martial system because of an officer's refusal to execute an order he believes to be immoral or illegal provides two opportunities. First, it provides a forum in which the individual may state his moral case in public in an attempt to justify his action. Second, it provides the military structure itself with the opportunity to evaluate the case relative to the order issued and to take appropriate action against the issuing authority if so justified. Thus, the



court-martial is a two-way street. Like the American legal structure itself, a court-martial can only respond to a justiciable issue and, again like the American legal system, a justiciable issue can only be considered so after some law or directive has in fact been violated. Accordingly, viewed in this light, the act of refusing to carry out an order deemed by the individual to be immoral really constitutes an appeal within the military legal structure to higher authority for a judgment on the original order itself. From this perspective, refusal becomes the military equivalent of technical civil disobedience in the service of a higher moral case. It is not equivalent to cowardice or disloyalty in any a priori sense.

V. What we have attempted to this point is to delineate and explain several courses of action open to the military officer faced with the difficult choice of effectuating a moral choice in the face of career imperatives. Clearly, some avenues of protest are more practical than others. Moreover, certain protest alternatives carry greater risks. Even so, all the avenues of protest outlined above are legitimate in that they are consistent with the dominant values of the democratic polity that the officer swears to serve. Further, they are equally consistent with the military values of "duty, honor, and country" when properly understood. The first moral obligation of any officer is to ensure that his conduct and that of his superiors is basically consonant with the values of the society and the constitution that he has sworn to uphold together with the moral constraints of the military system. From that perspective, none of the courses of action available to effect moral protest may be con-

strued as a moral basis for massive disobedience of civilian authority by the military structure. In short, the question of coups d'état drawn on moral lines is beyond the scope of the argument as presented.

What is interesting in attempting to come to grips with the problem of moral protest within a military structure is the fact that the principal democratic nation within Western society, the United States, has been unsuccessful in developing a doctrine concerning the subject, while other nations have developed a functional ethos of protest within their own armed services. For example, both British and French societies have long recognized the right of the military officer to resign in protest and, indeed, he is expected to resign over questions of honor. With respect to the Germans, the mechanisms of moral protest have been preserved in the operation of the Board of Honor (although this "Board" could function as well to discipline officers failing to meet standards of honor) and, in some extreme cases, even in the legitimation of suicide as a permissible course of action. The Japanese code of Bushido, which literally required suicide from an officer who felt himself in moral disagreement with military policy, is too well known to require further elaboration here. Now, to be sure, some of these measures are rather extreme while others, such as the French and English examples, are entirely consistent with democratic values. The point is, however, that military structures in other societies have developed a functional doctrine of resistance for the military officer caught between the demands of conscience and the orders of his superiors.

As for the severe behavioral irregularities that were widespread in Vietnam, they may be linked to a failure to evolve a mechanism for moral protest. That

this failure had serious consequence for the behavior of the officer corps during the Vietnam conflict is beyond question. However, the failure to develop a formal doctrine of moral protest is only part of the difficulty. The fact is that the formal rules of any bureaucratic structure will be effective only to the extent that they are supported and reinforced by the informal norms and values of that structure. Thus, the moral failures of the American officer corps had developed no formalized doctrine of moral guidance. Moreover, the informal rules of the military sub-society—"don't rock the boat," "it all counts for twenty," "be loyal to your superiors"—would have effectively worked to undercut the operation of any such doctrine. In short, the doctrines functional to career success, although informally articulated, stand in stark opposition to those doctrines requiring the officer to make moral choices. Stated otherwise, violation of traditional codes of honor not only paid off in career terms, but was in fact virtually demanded by the terms of the system itself.

This tension between informal norms functional to individual career advancement and an attempt to develop a formalized doctrine of moral protest within the officer corps can be expected to persist even in the face of the most sincere efforts at reform. Given the development of a formalized code of moral behavior, the fact remains that informal norms have to be developed and deeply embedded in the military structure to the extent that the officer who exercises his moral prerogatives is not degraded or discriminated against by his peers or superiors. Members of the officer corps at all levels must come to realize that the exercise of moral prerogative is both a loyal and moral manner of acting. We must come to make such

actions functional from the perspective of career interests so as to encourage their undertaking. As things now stand, the officer who goes over his commander's head, resigns from the service or goes to the IG is commonly viewed as "disloyal" or a "quitter." In a very real sense, the military has made individual loyalty an absolute while almost ignoring or even neutralizing the moral commitment the military system requires if it is to be at all cohesive. At the very least, such action is regarded as damaging to an individual loyalty and not a higher one. So long as violations of the latter are allowed to remain functional to career advancement, then it is unlikely that any formalized code of behavior relevant to moral resistance will take root.

**VI.** The case for a formalized doctrine of moral protest within the military structure is not without its opponents, especially as it addresses the twin perspectives of resignation and refusal to execute orders. Concerning the latter, the argument against developing and implementing such a code is simply that if every commander had to go around explaining every order (or at least demonstrate that it was not immoral) to every officer in order to gain compliance, then the military structure would border on paralysis and bring into question its ability to carry out its mission effectively. The argument is not overly convincing. Questions of moral choice do not, as a rule anyway, arise so frequently as to merit the charge that all orders would have to be justified to subordinates in advance. Indeed, if conditions are such as to provoke a substantial number of officers to demand such justification, this in itself would be a clear indication

that the military structure was already approaching breakdown. In a word, if a large number of officers are forced to conclude that certain policies require questioning on such a large scale, then we would be merely witnessing the symptoms of a disease which in all probability is already terminal.

Resignation as a course of action to effectuate moral protest is most often criticized on the grounds that it amounts to "quitting." Why not, the argument goes, stay within the system and work to bring about changes? To the extent that the argument has any merit, it is clearly more applicable at the general officer level where verbal disagreement may provoke policy change. To be sure, the question of future success remains open, but available evidence drawn from the past suggests that staying within the system and trying to change it simply do not work. Consider that during the 10 years of the Vietnam conflict, a multitude of individuals faced the problem of moral choice over one policy or another. Yet, since no one resigned at the general officer level, we may assume that such men stayed on to continue their efforts to change the system. However, it seems clear that for all their efforts (most undocumented), little in the way of major policy change was accomplished and the Vietnam "horrors" endured. The conclusion seems clear that the alternative of "working within the system" really begs the moral question, since the evidence we have available points overwhelmingly to the fact that such a strategy simply did not work to bring about change. In the end, it seems more probable that the system changed the dissenters than that the dissenters changed the system.

**VII.** In assessing the failure of the American military structure to develop a doctrine of moral protest legitimated for use by its officer corps, it seems clear that one major effect of this failure was the tendency for career functional norms to take precedence over, or act as substitutes for, moral guidelines in the face of questionable orders and policies. Accordingly, careerism ran, and apparently continues to run, rampant, constituting a danger to truly effective military organization and operations. It provokes the worst type of disloyalty under the guise of loyalty, namely, a marked failure to question policy or practices which either do not work (falsification of intelligence reports, search and destroy, etc.) or else extract too high a moral price for their success (bombing rural populations in order to force them into cities as a mechanism for increasing control). What is clearly needed is the development of a formal Army doctrine which teaches officers the accepted avenues of moral protest and encourages them, through the support of informal organizational values, to travel these avenues when urged to do so by the press of personal courage and morality.

The fact that other cultures and military organizations have developed such doctrines to serve the same ends in their armies is proof enough that the task is not impossible or unachievable. We must, of course, always take care to ensure that the pathways of moral protest for the military remain consistent with the democratic values of the polity as a whole and are never allowed to become an excuse for coordinated military action against properly constituted civilian authority. In the end we are tempted to conclude that we have far less to fear from a coup d'état than from a military organization full of careerist

values. Such a structure can only become increasingly out of touch with the values of the society which it ostensibly serves. Further, it risks disaster for that society and for itself, not through design (the coup d'état), but through incompetence as manifested in its increasing inability to challenge and ultimately resist policies and practices whose primary value rests in the contention that they are functional to career achievement.

#### NOTES

1. However, it is true that the American Army does subscribe to the Geneva Convention. Further, every young officer is told at some point in his career that he may refuse an order, but it is quickly added that every order is presumed to be legal until proven otherwise. Anyone who has had the experience of sitting through these basic indoctrination features is quite aware of the fact that they are not regarded as serious guides to action. Indeed, the notion of abiding by the rules of "civilized combat" as specified in the Geneva Convention is often treated as impractical and with contempt. In any event, a doctrine of moral resistance for the military officer has never been developed by the American Army nor has it received the kind of informal support which would be required if such a doctrine were to function successfully.

2. Principally, *respondeat superior* has been used as a defense against charges of war crimes during World War II and was rejected by international tribunals as a valid defense. The concept has two broader dimensions. The first is that Western military codes enjoin obedience to legal orders. Further, responsibility for illegal acts increases as the chain of command rises. Indeed, where war crimes occur the failures to exercise control associated with those crimes among subordinates, even in the absence of knowl-

edge thereof, is no defense. Essentially, he who commands is responsible.

3. Such obligations spring from many sources, not the least of which are the values of the society that an officer has sworn to uphold, as well as the military organization of which he is a part. In any event, such obligations are personally imposed and the obligation would exist qua obligation whether the means to effectuate it are functional to career advancement or not. In short, the case of circumstantial ethics is rejected.

4. Note that the "plausible denial" doctrine at least implicitly was the defense pled by Captain Medina and, ultimately, Major General Koster in the My Lai massacre proceedings. It is precisely the doctrine of "plausible denial" which violates *In Re Yamashita* and the responsibility attached to all commanders under the historical doctrine *respondeat superior*. Yamashita was hanged not because he ordered atrocities. Indeed, the evidence was that General Yamashita had little knowledge of the conduct of his forces at the time and even less control. He was hanged because of the clear application of the ethical principle that a commander is responsible for everything his men do or fail to do. This is a principle which has long been applicable to American military custom and practice.

5. The important point here is that the refusal to execute an order per se is not the end of the judgmental process. Whether in military or civilian society, that act is judged at a later time as to its acceptability or unacceptability. Thus, the willingness "to accept the consequences" of one's act of refusal is really a statement of readiness to justify one's actions at some appropriate time. It is not an assumption of a priori guilt or of one's preparedness to accept summary justice on the spot.



*Alfred Kern*

## WAITING FOR EURIPIDES

**R**ICHARD A. GABRIEL asserts that the American military desperately needs a moral renaissance. To "recover from the debacle of Vietnam," the Army must "ensure that its officers develop the capacity to balance moral and career decisions more responsibly." To achieve this ethical imperative, Gabriel calls for the development of a doctrine of moral protest for use by the officer corps. He reminds us that within the British and French traditions, the military officer has not only the right but even the obligation "to resign over questions of honor." Not quite as afterthought, Gabriel observes that his four avenues of protest are "legitimate in that they are consistent with the dominant values of the democratic polity that the officer swears to serve."

Had he chosen to do so, Gabriel might have based his argument wholly on the last point; i.e., military officers have the legal right of moral protest

---

Alfred Kern is the author of novels, *Made In USA*, *The Width of Waters*, and *The Trial of Martin Ross*. Now retired, he was the Frederick F. Seely Professor of English at Allegheny College, Meadville, Pennsylvania, and a Distinguished Visiting Professor at the US Air Force Academy, 1970-80. This article is from the US Air Force Academy *Journal of Professional Military Ethics*, April 1980.

because the dominant values of American democracy insist that such rights be given. This argument, a reflection of the views of Richard Hofstadter and other consensus historians, may be summarized quickly. With starts and stops, periods of progress and reaction, the United States has moved steadily forward in reaffirming the constitutional franchise. In the decisions of the Warren Court (*Brown versus the School Board*, the *Escobido* and *Miranda* decisions), the civil rights provisions of the Constitution—the Bill of Rights particularly—were conclusively ruled to be enforceable law and not merely an expression of national aspiration. As Justice Hugo Black declared at the time of the school desegregation orders, such rulings are not unwarranted judicial legislation but constructionist decisions. Furthermore, the shifts in public policy which anticipated the civil rights decisions of the Warren Court and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 occurred at least a generation earlier. If the Wagner Act excluded public employees from the right to collective bargaining, such employees have been included more recently. And so, this argument goes, the undeniable tide of America's political destiny now washes up to include the military. If not unionization, surely the military is entitled to a legitimate grievance procedure where questions of personal integrity are at issue.

Of course, counter-arguments can be made. It may be said that we already have such procedures in place, that we don't need them, that in a combat situation such procedures are unmanageable or impossible, that "personal integrity" may become a euphemism for politicizing the armed forces. For the moment, let us consider such counter-argument to be irrelevant. Suffice it to say that the consensus view—with all the precedent of the past fifty

years—provides sufficient cause. However, Gabriel merely acknowledges that his proposals are consistent with the values of American democracy, not that such values are the first and best justification for those proposals.

Then, what is Gabriel about here? His essay impresses me as being the post-war version of the anti-Vietnam position. If he compresses the causes to concentrate on the cure, the diction which expresses those causes transcends argument to become lyric outcry: "Vietnam horrors, moral bankruptcy." Surely, the principal strength of the essay is to be found in that compressed passion, for Gabriel means exactly what he is saying: the American military suffers from moral bankruptcy brought about by its participation in Vietnam horrors, horrors caused and then compounded by careerism. Gabriel is urging the military to establish avenues of moral protest in response to the causes as he states them. In short, the military is being exhorted to confess its crimes, the doctrine of moral protest becoming both prevention and cure as well as an act of contrition. Such a diagnosis must command us more than the doctor's prescription. If Gabriel is correct about the illness, his medicine is too weak to heal us; a medic does not stick a band-aid on the deepest shrapnel wounds.

As best I can tell, "careerism" has come to mean the opposite of leadership. If George Patton and Douglas MacArthur were ambitious leaders, they were not "careerists" in the current sense. A careerist is a square-filler, a time-server. His talents and imagination have been circumscribed to perform managerial duties. He evaluates personal and military options only for their consequences on his advancement. His goal is not service but full status retire-

ment. In Vietnam, he went along, refused or was incapable of disagreement. But how far are we to push the idea of careerism in combat? Are we to believe that "body count" (killing to kill, the "assumption" that a dead Vietnamese was Viet Cong) was wholly the consequence of irresponsible careerism. Ironically, to invoke careerism as a significant explanation of Vietnam horrors is what one might expect from the very people Gabriel scorns as careerists. We shall never transform our experience in Vietnam with such over-simplifications.

Military careerism is the corporate-managerial mentality in uniform. Careerism is the capture and subjugation of the mind and spirit by faceless and anonymous systems. Careerism is a psychological condition induced by a feeling of individual helplessness against technological/political bureaucracy. Unfortunately, such careerism is now to be found everywhere—churches, universities, trade unions, social service agencies, even Brownie Troops—and it is to be resisted. But unless fundamental changes occur, Gabriel's program for moral protest will become part of the system. Hence: "Moral Protest, Square One—How to Process Deeply Felt Dissent."

If general officers did not resign in protest against political and/or military policy in Vietnam, is there reason to believe they would have done so if Gabriel's apparatus had been in place? Examined logically, the question is not whether such officers could have resigned but that they did not resign. I have no doubt that such a resignation would have been attended by newspaper headlines and television interviews; I doubt if such resignations would have made much difference. Indeed, to "legalize" the risk

and passion of individual dissent may be the best way to kill it. From Antigone's moral defiance of Creon's edicts to Martin Luther King's "Letters from a Birmingham Jail," we have learned that moral protest carries real power only when there are personal consequences. Making such protest "legitimate" will render it less consequential and diminish its effectiveness.

If I am not enthusiastic about Gabriel's proposal, I am sympathetic to his concerns. He insists on confronting us again with the questions of Vietnam and careerism, and we want people to do exactly that. However, we need to understand the questions more fully before we propose the answers. The causes and consequences of Vietnam and careerism are deeper and more complicated than Gabriel's therapies. For the present, I prefer to live and wrestle with those densities, and I believe that is also what the country should do. Above all, I am wary of cosmetic surfaces to disguise internal disorders. To argue against any legal reform is mindless, of course, but I am also responding to Gabriel's essay as he wrote it.

Would it be foolish and romantic to suggest that finally it will be art that redeems us? A number of years ago at a meeting devoted to the literature of the Holocaust, I heard a woman—herself a survivor of the concentration camps and the only survivor I've seen whose prison number was tattooed on her face—say that the only work which had touched her own experience was *The Trojan Women*. We need time. We need tough-mindedness. We need to be chastened without the loss of personal and collective courage. We need to be admonished and advised by the example of our own past conduct, but we need the

**resolve to accept and fulfill our responsibilities. And we need to be constructively engaged while we are waiting for Euripides.**

*Philip A. Johnson*

## WHY DON'T WE FOLLOW THE RULES?

**B**ASIC MILITARY TRAINING fulfills a variety of administrative and substantive functions, all of which contribute to the central purpose of transforming civilians into useful members of the military. Among all the various bits of vital knowledge the trainee, officer candidate, or military service cadet accumulates, it is forcefully brought to his or her attention that it is wise to obey orders, rules, and regulations. This is frequently accomplished by forcefully accentuating the converse principle—that it is most unwise to disobey. But the lesson is nevertheless effectively conveyed. The principles of duty, loyalty, and responsibility, each of which has a large component of obedience involved, are widely held to be among the highest virtues of military professionals. For those more motivated by the stick than by the carrot, the Uniform Code of Military Justice holds out the

---

Colonel Philip A. Johnson, USAF, formerly Associate Professor, Department of Law, US Air Force Academy, is currently assigned to Headquarters, US Air Force, Europe, Office of the Staff Judge Advocate. This essay is reprinted from the US Air Force Academy *Journal of Professional Military Ethics*, September 1981.

promise of a Dishonorable Discharge and up to five years in the Armed Forces Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth for those who refuse to obey.

But there is not one among us who has served any appreciable time in the armed forces without personally witnessing numerous violations of published orders and regulations. I daresay we have not always reported such violations. I would even venture to say that in our day most of us have committed a few.

Many such violations are not particularly interesting, from the standpoint of ethical analysis. We can probably set aside clearly corrupt and venal acts that are committed out of motives no more noble than greed or malice. Persons who steal government equipment or vandalize property or falsify travel vouchers are best treated as common criminals whose actions usually fail to appeal to any ethical base, no matter how farfetched.

On the other hand, a type of disobedience that might provoke at least some debate about the ethics involved concerns all those rules that are evaded because they seem to be patently absurd. These are the requirements that appear to the actor to be the products of ignorance, politics, or empire-building, violations of which cause few pangs of conscience because the individual concerned perceives no significant connection between the requirement and the effective accomplishment of any function or mission. I suspect each of us would have our own favorite candidates for inclusion in this category. If we sat down together and made a list of such things, the list might include some of the following: flu shots; annual aerobics testing; minimum sorties, requirements for flying hours and touch-and-go landing practice for flying personnel; mandatory Professional Military



Education courses; prescribed exposure to Air Force Now films; and required training on topics such as information security, disaster preparedness, effective writing, the laws of armed conflict, supply procedures, equipment policies, civilian personnel, drug and alcohol abuse, race relations, and conflicts of interest. Resistance to such "required" activities occasionally surfaces as noisy defiance, but it more frequently takes the form of sullen noncompliance, occasionally accompanied by the falsification of records. Leaving aside the obvious issue of the actual merit of each of these items, and assuming for argument's sake that in a particular situation the policy involved seems to serve no useful purpose, I would suggest that there still aren't many interesting ethical questions raised by these issues because the only costs of compliance are annoyance and each individual's time. It would be very difficult to make out any kind of case that it would be unethical to comply; instead you hear it said that noncompliance is no big thing. Maybe so.

But a much more important ethical issue concerns particular requirements that violate a fundamental right of some individual. For example, cadets at the service academies were required to attend chapel until 1972 when the federal courts decided that compulsory chapel attendance violated their rights of religious freedom guaranteed by the First Amendment. Similarly, by act of Congress military members who acquire religious or ethical beliefs inconsistent with continued service in an armed force are excused from fulfilling their active duty service obligations. A member who is ethically opposed only to a certain war or conflict is not similarly excused. And a series of court cases has reaffirmed the principle that the

military's interest in the neat and wholesome appearance of its uniformed members outweighs the personal liberty of service members to choose their own hairstyle and otherwise to do their own thing. Also Air Force medical personnel are not generally required to assist in performing therapeutic abortions if they have personal ethical objections to abortion.

Probably the most comforting thing that can be said to commanders and supervisors about such ethical conflicts and questions is that they are normally resolved at higher levels of authority, as in each of the examples mentioned in the paragraph above. But not always. I remember an incident in an Air Force Academy cadet dormitory a couple of years ago in which a number of cadets asked their Air Officer Commander to order one of the members of the squadron to stop coming around to their room to discuss religion. The cadet in question felt a strong religious obligation to share his beliefs with others, but the cadets he approached had various reasons why they wanted to be left alone. Balancing all the competing interests in a situation like this one is far from easy for anyone in authority. And what will we think of the ethics of an individual who resists the order of a superior telling him to cease and desist?

Another interesting problem area of ethical conflict for military personnel concerns acts that violate some military directive but are done out of loyalty to a family member. An example might be a person who fails to appear for work at the scheduled time, who then calls in to report that he or she will be late or absent because he or she is caring for a family member who is ill, or is dealing with some other family emergency. Most supervisors are very understanding about such situations, at least if they are convinced

that the facts have been accurately reported to them. The authorization of emergency leave is based on an explicit recognition that family obligations sometimes ought to take precedence over what would otherwise be a member's normal duties. The rub comes when there is a difference of opinion between a military person and those in authority over him or her. In overseas areas there is a chronic problem with emergency leave because many persons' concepts of their extended family exceed the definition of "family" in the military regulation, and because members' judgments of what constitutes an "emergency" requiring their presence fail to match up with the authorized reasons for emergency leave listed in the regulation. In an overseas area, the result is usually a frustrated and angry soldier who can become a morale problem in the organization and probably a poor performer. In the US itself, the result is too often that the member simply goes AWOL. In my experience with numerous such cases in various base legal offices, the circumstances of the absence have always been considered as a strong mitigating factor when imposing punishment, but they have never been treated as a complete defense. And I don't argue that they should be, as a policy matter. What I am suggesting is that a member caught between duty to family and duty to the Air Force has an ethical problem of considerable dimension.

Loyalty to friends and co-workers seldom calls for absence from the job, but it is frequently the reason for failing to report misconduct or even circumstances that render people unfit for duty. What does a pilot do if he knows that another pilot in his squadron has a problem with drug or alcohol abuse? What do you do when you see someone in your office

copy a personal item on the Xerox machine, or use government paper and envelopes for personal letters? The approved solution is of course that your duty to the Air Force requires a prompt report to someone in authority. The reality is no one I have ever known has always complied with that policy. Most of us have a *de minimus* threshold—some things are too minor to do anything at all about them. If such incidents are repeated, or become more serious, we may try to deal with them by talking to the individual concerned. Only if things really get out of hand are most of us inclined to make a formal report.

One of the possible reasons for this response is a concern for the welfare of the person concerned which may outweigh one's sense of duty to the government when it appears that the harm done is wholly insignificant. But there is another possible reason for overlooking the minor improprieties of co-workers or other associates, one that I suggest is much more interesting from an ethical viewpoint. What I refer to is a judgment that "following the book" may in fact do more harm than good to the successful accomplishment of the organization's mission. Personal loyalties aside, the commotion, resentment, and perhaps loss of one's own status or influence that could be expected to result from a formal report of trivial misconduct might be expected to be a bigger threat to the organization than was the initial offense. Of course, this argument might be said to rest on a lack of confidence in the fair and judicious operation of the disciplinary system, and it will carry much more weight where the disciplinary system is in fact regarded as arbitrary or overly harsh. But on the other hand some of these unpleasant results can be expected to occur merely because one had the temerity

to fink on the guy next door. The argument is also rather circular, since people are not likely to be upset unless you violate an established and expected pattern of behavior, and your decision will either contribute to or erode the existing pattern. On the other hand, you will normally be acting on a set range, with certain expectations already in place, and you may decide that the uproar you would cause is not worthwhile.

The most interesting ethical problem in this area, it seems to me, is the situation where the very content of rules and regulations seems to interfere with the proper accomplishment of one's mission. This might occur when the general purpose for which the rules were established seems less important than something unforeseen, or peculiar to your local situation, or raised by circumstances that have drastically changed since the rule was announced. We are not talking now about noncompliance based upon personal convenience, personal liberty, personal loyalty, or any other personal interest. I wish to suggest that disobedience sometimes occurs out of a selfless concern for what is in military circles usually regarded as our ultimate goal — accomplishment of the mission. *I also suggest that in at least some of these cases disobedience may be the most ethical course of action.*

I am going to give some examples of situations that seem to raise this issue. In some of them, most of us would agree that the rules should have been followed. In others, most of us might agree to the contrary. I think others might be the subject of considerable debate.

1. About ten years ago a civilian employee at a flying base reported to higher headquarters that his

base commander had ordered him to put a large quantity of supplies and equipment into a ditch and bury them. These items had been acquired in various ways because they were regarded as essential to proper operations and maintenance. The problem was they were in excess of the supply and equipment authorizations established by higher headquarters. As I heard the story, they were to be temporarily interred for the duration of an outside inspection of the unit, and then be exhumed for continued service.

2. On a small scale, I was told by a former C-130 maintenance officer that it was a common practice by officers responsible for theater maintenance to have one or more engines "hidden away" (i.e., not listed on accountability records) because the number of engines authorized is insufficient to "keep 'em flying," and because there are times when the paperwork required to *dispatch a replacement engine* takes too long.

3. The stories are legion of "padding" manpower or workload surveys in order to acquire manning slots or equipment that you know you probably can't get under the established rules, but that are absolutely essential to getting your unit's job done.

4. Procurement restrictions or delays are sometimes "finessed" by the use of devices such as creative writing of specifications to justify a "single-source" purchase, or by unauthorized purchases followed by requests for ratification. When two majors from the USAFA faculty were court-martialed a few years ago for falsifying travel vouchers, one of their explanations was that procurement of equipment repair services took so long that their research projects were constantly being interrupted. Their solution was to take the equipment downtown for im-

mediate repair at a civilian firm, pay for the repairs out of their private funds, and then to submit a phony travel voucher to reimburse themselves. Had there not been evidence of considerably greater thefts than could be identified with "repair costs," they might well have been treated more leniently.

5. The "protective reaction" strikes against North Vietnamese airfields that led to the demotion and retirement of General Lavelle, Seventh Air Force Commander, appear to have been conducted in defiance of orders from higher headquarters because they were considered to be important in prosecuting the war effort. There is still a lively argument as to whether the published accounts are accurate, but assuming that they are reliable this senior officer risked his career and reputation because he felt the orders he had been given obstructed the accomplishment of his mission.

6. What does one do with captured enemy prisoners? The various treaties on the conduct of armed conflict and the regulations that implement the treaties all require that prisoners be treated humanely. Even if you suspect that a prisoner has highly useful intelligence information you may not legally use force or threats to persuade him to talk. It is well documented from several wars that occasionally on-scene commanders have chosen to pursue their immediate mission by abusing prisoners to gain intelligence information. Ever hear of helicopter interrogation?

7. What if you are a physician who learns from a patient that he has a drinking problem? If the patient is on flying status or is performing duties covered by the Personnel Reliability Program you may have an immediate duty to make the problem known to the

proper authorities. But if you report it, you will probably have lost all effectiveness in helping that person solve his problem, and if word gets around that what you tell the doctor will get right back to your commander, you are unlikely to ever hear such confidences from anyone again. No privilege of confidentiality is officially recognized in this situation, but confidentiality is regarded as so important by most physicians that they practice it anyway, and most commanders are quite willing to leave it to the physicians involved to decide when the danger to others or to the mission justifies disclosure.

8. There are a wide variety of prescribed classroom procedures for academic classes at the Air Force Academy. Most faculty readers of this comment will admit that virtually no instructor follows them all, even though they are formally decreed by the Dean in Faculty Operating Instructions. When I first arrived as an instructor, compliance was uniformly good concerning the requirement that cadets must leave all outerwear on the hooks outside the classrooms. Then four years ago we quit heating the classrooms to a habitable temperature, and most instructors started granting requests by cadets to wear their jackets in class. I don't think the cadets are even asking anymore, and most instructors totally ignore the wear of outerwear in class. Some standards around the Air Force Academy have slipped because of sloth and inattention. This one has died because you can't conduct class properly when the students are physically uncomfortable.

There is a constant quest at the Academy to find a way to get the cadets to obey regulations. A corollary to this concerns how to get cadets — particularly those in the chain of command — to report violations



by others. There is, of course, no simple answer, and the reasons for violating a regulation, or for tolerating a violation by another, may range all the way from corrupt venality, to peer pressure, disagreement with the purpose or premise of the requirement, personal loyalty to other cadets, fear of retribution, general indifference, belief that the rule infringes important liberties, or a judgement that the squadron or wing runs much better when the rule is disregarded. I have heard this last position argued by cadets most often with regard to the prohibition of "undue familiarity," including the use of first names, between upperclass cadets and doolies before recognition. Some other causes I have heard championed have been ribald pranks and pep rallies to build morale, and the use of "positive leadership," which is the opposite of "Form 10 leadership." I cannot help but think that we as an institution contribute to confusion in this area as long as we applaud certain pranks and "spirit missions," and as long as various instructors and AOCs demonstrate quite inconsistent styles of leadership. I have confidence that most cadets will survive the process, and that they are mature enough by graduation to select the most useful theories and styles from among their experiences. I also suggest that we ought not to be overly anxious to brand individuals as bad people the first few times they stumble in the rather complex process of working it all out.

I am well aware that when a superior and a subordinate have a good-faith disagreement about a policy question, the approved solution is that the superior must be presumed to be the wiser. There are good reasons for this presumption, not the least of which is the broader experience and perspective of

the superior. For example, in dealing with an enemy prisoner the personnel on the scene may not pause to reflect on the consequences that their mistreatment of him may have when members of their own force are captured by the enemy. They might not appreciate the impact it would have on our nation's relationships with neutral nations if it became known that our forces had committed a war crime, and they might not foresee that an incident might so embitter the enemy that the process of negotiating a settlement of the conflict would be made more difficult. They might also fail to appreciate the possible consequences for the morale and discipline of our own troops, and the effects of such incidents on public support at home for the war effort.

Much the same can be said for the necessity of centralized decision-making in the allocation of resources such as supplies, equipment, and manpower. While one unit may know precisely how its mission suffers from the stinginess of higher headquarters, it is not in a position to know if someone else may be in an even worse position, or when someone else's problem may be a bigger factor in achieving the overall mission.

But there are times when the head-sheds seem to stretch this presumption to the breaking point, and beyond: "Those guys writing the regs just didn't foresee this peculiar situation, and furthermore the problem has changed."

Of course the answer to that argument is that the system is designed to grant exemptions, where appropriate, and that policies can always be changed to accommodate new circumstances. To which the answer frequently is: "I'm trying to fly airplanes out here—I don't have time to write staff papers." And

delay aside, it is an unfortunate fact that many field commanders have a certain lack of confidence in headquarters types, particularly when the odor of politics or press-agentry hangs over an issue. Sometimes it seems more useful to go ahead and do what needs to be done rather than waiting for a rational decision from on high.

Assuming you agree with the central premise of all this (which is, in case you missed it, There are occasions when disobedience may be more ethical than obedience) the question arises of what to do in specific cases? One is tempted to rejoin that knowledge is its own reward, but let me suggest some more useful derivatives of this point as well.

Persons who issue directives can reduce the problem and manage more effectively at the same time if they conscientiously review their directives regularly, looking at each for effectiveness and currency. Policy-making should be delegated as far down the chain of command as possible to permit accommodation to local conditions. The reasons for controversial policies should be carefully articulated and publicized. I know this last statement will raise hackles on every commander or supervisor who fervently believes that his troops should do what he says, just because he says so. The fact, alas, is that they won't, especially if their confidence in him ever flags.

Individuals who are considering violating some directive have the responsibility to examine their motives closely. It is far too easy to rationalize one's actions in the noblest of terms when you really did it for personal convenience. I suggest also that we ought to grant superiors some presumption of rationality, and that we should be willing to accept that there may be reasons for what they do that are not immediately

apparent to us. The treatment of a prisoner of war is suggested as an example. As faculty members are wont to tell students who complain about core curriculum requirements, "You don't know what you don't know."

And, finally, what conclusions should be drawn for the handling of incidents where disobedience is detected? Perhaps simply that we ought to take the time to explore the offender's motives. We are not likely to conclude in many cases that a medal should be awarded, but the motivation of the individual may be the most important factor in choosing a rational plan for correction and improvement, both for the individual and for the policy that was challenged.

*William J. Wallisch*

## THE ETHICS OF THE ELECTRONIC REVOLUTION: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE US AIR FORCE

**I**N PUBLICATION AFTER PUBLICATION I've read papers that sing the praises of the "electronic revolution." This isn't one of them. As a matter of fact, it's intended to be a warning. It's a warning that applies as much to military professionals as to anyone else dealing with the modern electronic media.

Now I know about all the advantages this revolution offers for education. Advanced communication technology can help greatly with our energy problems, for example. Through teleconferencing executives need not travel thousands of miles. They can merely tie their conference tables together with a satellite and—presto—they're face-to-face with each other. With an electronic blackboard, teletext, or videotext, they can pass printed information, too.

---

Lieutenant Colonel William J. Wallisch, USAF, now retired, was Associate Professor of English, Director of Media Instruction, and Assistant to the Dean of Faculty at the US Air Force Academy. This essay is from the US Air Force Academy *Journal of Professional Military Ethics*, November 1980.

And recent research in fiber optics technology also holds great promise. This cheap replacement for all the copper cable currently used in communication systems will permit us to tie much information together at a fraction of the cost of cable and with even better technical results.

Satellite communication systems and fiber cable will eventually tie our homes together also. We'll see the demise of the major networks and cable will be king. QUBE television, that experiment of interactive television now being conducted in Columbus, Ohio, is the prototype of home entertainment in the future, a technology that will offer practically unlimited program choices for viewers. And we'll be able to talk back and make our thoughts known to the people in the studio. All this is interesting.

The impact of this new technology on education will also be great. We will be able to dial up Professor So-and-So at MIT or Cal Tech and take the best course in the country without leaving our homes. The course exam will be part of the electronic package. From grade school to graduate school going to campus might really become passé.

Every American home will have a computer in the future. The video display screen, the computer, and the audio communication system will be a dream package that promises to free us of travel to the supermarket or bother about balancing our checkbook. We, too, will be able to see the person we're calling on the phone.

Cable television companies already bring the latest movies to living rooms across America and video disc technology offers still other possibilities for home entertainment and education. More courses,

old movies, new movies, and unlimited packages of sight and sound will be available in disc form to the average American at reasonable costs.

Well, so far, this essay does sound like one of those editorials promoting the wonders of electronic technology in the future. And it also sounds like one of my lectures on modern media. Every year I add to the list of wonders I tell the students about in my television class. And they dutifully write their papers extolling the new media horizons. We even try to imitate some of these futuristic programs on our own student-run program at the Air Force Academy, the *Blue Tube*.

But lately I find my lectures contain a sort of chilly warning. And the student papers, too, seem a bit sour, even though they still stand in awe of what might be possible through electronic technology.

What's going wrong? Nothing really. Nothing's happened yet. But we have begun thinking about what could happen if the managers of that new technology don't take just a moment to think about all the implications of their new equipment. We know they have given the circuit design of this technology careful thought, and the cost analyses are expert. But we've begun to wonder if they've thought about the consequences of all their planning.

For example. If QUBE television asks questions of its household viewers each night before they begin to use the "Touch Now" response button, what will the television station do with all that statistical information it gathers? I mean the "how many people are there with us," "how many men and how many women," and "what are your ages" kinds of questions eventually will yield quite a significant data bank of information. And if the computer knows who's

watching and what they watched — well, it's going to learn a lot about those people's tastes and habits. It can record votes for this and that; it can evaluate and record trends.

And if we sit more in front of the TV screens and displays in the future, we might walk less into each other's lives. Not that passing each other in metal boxes on the highways is all that great, but I wouldn't want anything to replace getting outside and meeting people. It would be too bad, really, if our young people don't get on campus sometime, even though better lectures "might" be possible at home over the new electronic system.

While thinking of this subject recently I was reminded of the last pages of Ray Bradbury's science fiction novel *Fahrenheit 451*. In that book everyone has at least a wall or two of what might be called television. The TV was holographic and even interactive if one had enough cash. Imagine that soap opera characters could be right with you in full size in your home and could even turn and ask your opinion. Despite wars that might rage outside, would people in the future come to believe that "reality" is what the TV screen consists of, that action is only there?

Marshall McLuhan argued a few years ago that the old medium will always be the first content of the new one. I really understood that idea one day at the Air Force Academy Library when I gazed down through a glass case at a Gutenberg Bible. The Gutenberg was a printed replica of the kind the monks had so lovingly and laboriously created by hand. The new medium had taken the old hand done Bible as its content. Then the movies took novels for content. Finally, TV took movies as content. McLuhan may have been right.



But throughout history, in all media that have come down through the ages, a common content has been maintained—content consisting of symbols that deal with human life. As a kid I used to love to press my ear to a radio speaker in the night and listen to far-off places. I was supposed to be sleeping, but instead I was listening to all those voices. It seemed like people carried on their conversations for anyone who would listen, regardless of the hour. Though most of us slept, we could be reassured of the fact that our species was talking on the airwaves, not ever giving up the reins of a sleeping world.

And the other day in one of my classes it occurred to the students that the ultimate content of media has always been us, the human beings who wrote the words, the stories, and the songs that fill the books, the airwaves, and the screens. We are the content of the old medium, and whatever new medium there might be.

Before we step into four walls of electronic magic as Ray Bradbury prophesies, a magic that holds such unlimited potential, I think we'd better make sure we're not going to step into an electronic nightmare. Because we are and always have been the ultimate content of our media, let's make sure we finally are not consumed by it. We must make sure that we can tell the difference between the electronic characters and ourselves. I don't want to be caught up in an electronic hall of mirrors and not be able to find my way out, bumping into electronic mirror images of myself each time I try to find the exit to real life.

From a holographic image I am not going to get love, compassion, and understanding. I'll get an image as cold as the mirror's surface. And even though I can talk back or press my console, what or who will I

be talking with? A programmed voice? And if I can vote for an issue or a public official, will my vote be later "reported" to someone? Will I be reminded that I didn't watch when I should have? Don't forget, the computer knows when we aren't watching too.

I said nothing's happened yet. Maybe it has at that. We may see some warning signals already. There are roughly 146 million television sets in America. Half of us own two sets, as a matter of fact. And we watch those screens on the average of 45 hours a week. That's a lot of sets, a lot of time devoted to watching them.

I know the printed word has caused kings and popes alike to react with outrage; heads have rolled because the printed medium dared make its point. That print has had a dramatic impact upon humankind is an understatement. Movies, too, have changed opinion and created perceptions about our very way of life. Radio has had considerable influence. Each medium has made its mark and taken its toll in terms of influence and perception.

But it seems somehow that TV has an appetite for its content like no other media. Researchers will tell you that television's early appetite for boxing nearly destroyed that sport. More recently we've seen political candidates eaten alive by the cameras. Senator Muskie cried on the screen in 1972 and lost any hope of a serious presidential candidacy. Other politicians have been defeated also because of a single media slip.

The recent ABSCAM affair brought about the expulsion of a Congressman, something that has only rarely happened in the history of congressional censorship. Did that have anything to do with the fact that Congressman Meyers was video-taped taking a

bribe? Ted Koppel of ABC's *Nightline* thought so, and even asked that question of a member of the Congressional Ethics Committee. And we watched all of it on TV. We have now even seen the Meyers tape on prime time news programs.

The television audience has been subjected to shattering visual stimuli. Wars, assassinations, and a host of terrible images—both real and make believe—have shocked and numbed the American psyche. I can't help but think that a lot of this content has had a less than healthy effect. TV eats at us, its content. It almost demands human sacrifice, even including the fall of presidents. I don't think any other media have been quite this ravenous.

Our television journalists seem to accept any media event that comes in their direction. Compact and photogenic, the captured US Embassy in Iran was a perfect place to set up cameras and "roll 'em." The cast of characters was confined to a small area and there was plenty of action (demonstrations, organized self-flagellation sessions, speeches, and prison drama) for prime time viewing in America.

Hollywood would have constructed an "Iranian set" just that way. The Embassy provided not only action itself, but was the perfect backdrop for the mob scenes. Lighting was perfect during the daytime and the set was easily lighted when there was an event "programmed" for the evening hours. The show at the Embassy drew and held every major American network, not to mention a score of international press people.

I well remember the night I was watching one of our network reporters doing a stand-up in front of the Embassy set and, almost as if he were making a discovery on the spot, he said something to the effect

that, "Just around the corner, Tehran is business as usual." And that was so. He even moved a camera around the corner from the Embassy and, sure enough, traffic and life were calm and ordered. Only at the set were things buzzing and tense. How remarkable! Tehran itself was "business as usual." Our correspondent was intrigued by that. There may be an important lesson in that perception for our journalists.

We need a crop of reporters who can make critical judgements about truth and "reality." Arnaud de Borchgrave and Robert Moss recently wrote a book called *The Spike*. The book is a fictional account of how Western journalists are manipulated by the KGB. Such a "fiction" is believable in an age where manipulation of information is a major industry. The new electronic journalist must be as alert for such manipulation as he has been in protecting his First Amendment rights. What he reports—night after night—will be interpreted as truth and reality. Training in how to separate manipulation from truth is something that must start in a reporter's first reporting class. Otherwise we'll have four networks: CBS, ABC, NBC, and KGB.

Our news people in Iran came off as naive, gullible, and willing dupes of any "event." The final outrage was the display of charred American bodies brought out for the willing, humming cameras, brought right into our living rooms with little regard for taste and decency. Our news people participated in the worst kind of media event.

We need a crop of reporters who can make story judgments and base those judgments on principles of taste. True, *Hustler* magazine is available in the world of print, but let the consumer choose it. It isn't

all of a sudden thrown into his living room faster than he can switch the dial. You can control what your children will read with more success than you can what the networks will deem suitable for prime time.

It's true that freedom of the press is one of our most cherished possessions in American democracy. But does that mean that there can never be just one moment when those behind the cameras might give some thought to what they're taping and photographing? In order to protect the freedom of the press, do we absolutely make no judgment at all about what's being done before the camera? Do we broadcast everything just so we can't be accused of being controlled?

I read lately in the pages of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and other publications that American industry is requesting more college-level courses in ethics. I submit that the viewing audience must demand those same courses for its journalists. That's the missing portion of the mass media curriculum today. Journalists must be trained in making judgments about what they'll air and who they'll expose. They must become more skilled in the art of not being manipulated and used by the subjects of the cover story. Similarly, American news broadcasts lack a certain sense of taste and editorial discretion. No matter how disgusting, a scene will often be included because the producers felt that the news value far outweighed the gory details. Maybe so. Maybe so.

I think it is time for electronic journalism to adopt a *serious* code of ethical standards. There is indeed an NAB Code of Conduct, but this code is a far cry from anything approaching tough standards. And, yes, let the standards be developed from within the profession and not by outside vigilante groups pressing their own morality. Let the profession police

and censor itself as do lawyers and physicians. Let it be "professional" electronic journalism, backed up by a tough set of contextual and procedural standards. Let that profession "give no deadly medicine" to its audience. The discussion about such a code could start in the classroom, with support from the profession and the large networks who broadcast news, information, and features over the most fabulous electronic communications network ever constructed.

Some wise old sage once said that one should never get into an argument with the guy who buys ink by the barrel. So it is, I suppose, that one could make a similar argument that it's unwise to get into a fight with someone who owns the airwaves, or buys, sells, and owns prime time like it were so much feed and grain. There is only one problem with this notion: the airwaves are owned by the public. Despite that fact it has seemed for many years that the networks owned the airways for use as a profit-making monopoly.

Electronic news gathering starts with a portable camera, a crew, and a reporter going into the field. This news-gathering team will interview a subject or sit in the audience of a speech or witness some kind of event that happens in the world. That interview or event may very well take an hour or more, but because of tight formats the story itself may actually only last for 15-30 seconds on the six o'clock news. What happens between the time the shooting session is over and the segment is presented on the air is called the editing session. This is simply a time when the reporter comes back and rolls the tape and the film making extensive cuts so that it can be made into a compact story for broadcast between commercial messages. You've heard of the face on the cutting room floor. Editing is where the cut happens.

The trouble with this industry practice is that audiences aren't always sophisticated enough to think about those edits that are made in the back rooms of the studio. Many a politician, military leader, business executive, and media personality has sat in front of the screen and gasped at the result of the editor's cuts. "That's not what I said at all," is an often heard living room disclaimer. It's time for the industry to think about those edits. They can create another reality, something different from what actually went on. Military leaders must deal with the realities of news reporting, or find themselves helpless in front of the camera. It's not possible to "create" favorable coverage in these times; things were even worse during the Vietnam era. But our top leadership and our public affairs people must continue to deal with the media in an open way. Gone are the days of "press agency." As a matter of fact, I almost think commanders are better off dealing directly with reporters, rather than creating the impression that they're putting a "flack" between themselves and the media.

We have been training our people in such areas as communication and human relations for years now. Professional military training courses, such as Squadron Officer School, Air Command and Staff College, and the Air War College, include large blocks of instruction on dealing with audiences and the skills of communication in general. For example, OTS, ROTC, and the military academies train cadets intensively in the communicative arts. Why not take advantage of that and let our military leaders do their own talking for a change?

In 1456 Gutenberg's press made mass literacy possible. This was the medium that enabled the human race to take giant steps in terms of education,

information, and social advancement. Not since that remarkable milestone has such an equal opportunity been possible. The electronic revolution offers a similar opportunity. But the potential for mass manipulation of information looms as well. Those who used print introduced the novel, the text book, the dictionary. Great libraries were established everywhere written by the finest minds of each age. There was pulp, too—lots of it. But everywhere there was substance to check the writings of fools and knaves.

Substance! That is the key to learning, to worthwhile media content. I'm afraid that so much of television today lacks that key element that it might become nothing more than pulp and meaningless "electronic leaflets." Just observe the content and length of major news items and then for the fun of it see how much of that 30-minute news show is devoted to sports. Just think: everything that happened in the world today in a 30-minute package. But, is it the "real world"?

I'm excited about the electronic revolution. Television has been my preoccupation for years. I've produced television. I teach television. I watch television. I teach a course in mass communication that actually produces its own seven-minute news and feature program shown over a collegiate closed-circuit TV system. Students learn scripting, reporting, on-camera performance, and all of the studio technical positions that actually put a program on the air. It's typical of hundreds of other media courses found in American higher education.

But beyond all of this, I'm convinced there must be more to such a course. My students sense that, too. Lately on network TV I'm convinced by the con-



tent of our entertainment and news programs that little attention has been paid to the ethics of journalism. As a teacher, a media scholar, I'm worried. My students, too, are worried.

I'm proposing that we start with the curriculum. I know that there is at least one course devoted to ethical concerns, but there must be more. Deep concern for things like taste and propriety must be built into editing courses. A respect for privacy must be a part of news gathering and interviewing training, and, most of all, substantive content must be seen as the backbone of every lead story.

In fact, the mass media curriculum is in a state of unbalance. Technology is running away with our electronic journalism. Cameras, switchers, audio consoles, lighting grids, editors, electronic graphics, and the engineers and technicians who put it all together really do their part far better than those who provide media content. American television and movies are beautifully done — *technically*. Too often the tape and celluloid are tied to a script devoid of substance.

At a minimum, I think it's time for newspeople and the schools of electronic journalism to rethink the concept of reporting over the television medium. That it is a powerful instrument of information goes without saying. That it can therefore broadcast whatever it deems necessary is not a foregone conclusion. Like the person who continues to achieve his will because he is allowed to say whatever comes to his mind, so should American audiences finally tire at such presumptuous behavior. The gore of selected Vietnam footage, live assassinations, and the scenes of American bodies displayed in Iran might tell us that we've had enough manufactured "realism" for a while.

A lot of current programming is probably done without either malice or deliberate forethought. It's not a case of premeditated murder. Rather, it may be a case of simplistic and naive, unsophisticated journalism. And a stronger medium—four walls of interactive holographic image tied to a computer—holds open the possibility of more manipulation of information and lasting damage to the public mind.

My students at the Air Force Academy have evidenced an increasing discomfort with commercial TV lately. We're still reading the glowing editorials about media technology and the future. And we're just as excited as those authors are about the potential that fiber optic technology, satellites, cable TV, HBO, video discs, and teletext, computers, teleconferences, and digital technology hold for civilization. But we're also becoming increasingly skeptical. We know the new technology is going to arrive soon. We can't wait until there's a QUBE-like system here in our town. But we're going to be watchful.

The American military shouldn't escape a critical analysis either. The huge American Forces Network is just as sophisticated and well equipped as its commercial counterparts. Moreover, it has a captive audience in overseas areas where there are no other English-speaking broadcasts. It provides news and information over both radio and television, using commercial programs to fill up the time it has not programmed for.

So it is, then, that public affairs officers and military broadcast specialists face the same kind of responsibility in terms of taste and content. Not only do they pass on the sins of the network producers ("This program is being made available for our armed

forces. . ."), but they also face an organizational reality which insists upon the sponsor (Uncle Sam) being put into the best light possible.

And yet fair's fair. American Forces Radio Television Service (AFRTS), for all its size and sophistication, is, nonetheless, a house organ. But that doesn't let its managers, producers, writers, technicians, and commanders off the hook of moral responsibility. It only requires extra responsibility to not manipulate its captive audience. Military commanders and broadcasters can achieve quality service over AFRTS by constant attention to sound ethical programming and content selection.

Such practice must start at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, the home of the Defense Information School. And it also should start at the three American military academies in the classrooms where future commanders are educated. Those commanders and military leaders will eventually have life and death control over armed forces broadcasting content. The "Blue Tubers" at the Air Force Academy, at least, are one group that has had the opportunity to think out beforehand the responsibility they will have as professional military media managers.

I think the communications teacher has a responsibility to put a chill into the air of the classroom. Students, too, have the responsibility to stand back and carefully examine the implications of the new technology. These students will become the managers of these new media systems. It is essential that they do so with a deep concern for human privacy, good taste, and commonsense reporting.

And while we're talking about the curriculum, let's not forget those who will be the engineers, the executives, and the managers of the new technologies.

Beyond the news report, these people will be the keepers of the QUBE-like data bases. They will control the content, policy, and direction of programming. They will engineer the new systems that will tie the world together creating that "Global Village" McLuhan once talked about. Vested in them will be the trust that the village will not be manipulated by the electronic wonders that have the potential to bring humankind closer together.

And all of that technology is firmly implanted in the armed forces. We have a television network; we have the computers. Someday AFRTS will have a QUBE-like system. And like big business, our military bases will have a cable system that will allow leadership to transmit information via TV sets located right in work areas. At this writing, as a matter of fact, the Dean of the Faculty at the Air Force Academy is testing such a network that ties all departments and staff agencies together for video announcements. *Blue Tube* already broadcasts its message to cadets over a closed circuit system that connects some 350 classrooms with video distribution, and Air Force installations like McGuire AFB, New Jersey, have had cable TV for years.

That the Air Force—the US military—will be heavily involved in the electronic revolution of the future is obvious. We thrive on communication. No, we depend upon it. It can mean the difference between victory or defeat. But with all of this technology will come the same dangers, the same pitfalls that face commercial public media. And the temptation to take advantage of such a captive audience will always be there. Similarly, command and control at the highest levels has the potential to overcontrol the military itself if it is not careful, and objective!

*Part IV*

**WAR AND  
MORALITY**



*Noel Gayler*

## NUCLEAR DETERRENCE— ITS MORAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

**W**HAT ARE MILITARY ETHICS, and what is morality as it is applied to the profession of arms? I'm reminded that, as in many other things, there is a curious linkage, as well as an antithesis, between morality and pornography. Both of them are extraordinarily difficult to define, but you know them when you see them. In that spirit I'm going to talk a little bit about the military world as I think it should be, the military world as I have observed it, and then the ethical problems—some very real and very serious ones—that will confront you if you aspire, as I hope

---

Admiral Gayler, in his 45 years in the US Navy, served as CINCPAC, Director of the National Security Agency, and as Deputy Director of the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff. This paper is from a talk given at the USAF Academy in May 1983, as a Distinguished Speakers Program presentation. An earlier version was presented at the National Defense University, Fifth Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics, January 1983. Reprinted from the US Air Force Academy *Journal of Professional Military Ethics*, August 1983.

you all do, to leadership. Anybody who aspires to leadership, I can promise you, will sooner or later have to deal with some tough ethical questions, questions where there will be no manual, no mentor, no old instructor, no one to whom you can go for counsel except your own thought, your own reasons and your own feeling.

I came from a Navy family. As a young officer I was quite content with the idea that serving the US Navy to the best of my ability was all I ever had to do. I could really not see any ethical problem ever coming up if I simply served as well as I could. Nowadays people are faced with far more ambiguous choices. When I was the skipper of the *Ranger* and we went into San Francisco Harbor, I always had the crew on deck formed up to spell out "Power for Peace." I served very proudly with, though not in, the Strategic Air Command, and their motto, that I remember so well, was "Peace is our Profession." We have to make sure that these and like slogans are a reality.

Now there's a place for power in the world. There's a place for resistance to expansionism, and a place for coercion under military threat or by actual use of military arms. There are great powers and there are smaller ones which, if not constrained by other powers, will in fact subjugate their neighbors if they get a chance. They must be contained; they must be restrained and they must be educated, if you will, possibly in the school of hard knocks, to make sure that the freedoms we value are protected. We do have valid, vital foreign policy and military objectives, and it's our responsibility to be able to carry these out. Coercion, for these purposes, is valid and ethical. It keeps us free. Deterrence is valid and ethical. If we design our forces so that it's insane to come against us

because of the strengths we have—for that and no more, not for aggression—then we are doing something which is valid and in which we can take pride. But punishment is not a valid idea. Neither is revenge.

I want to see the United States continue to be the number one power in the world, in military strength as well as wisdom and economy. I'm sure we all share that feeling. I think being number one is in the interests of this country and the world because we are the only power that is both great and free. There are great powers and there are free powers. But we are the only country with both, and we have a special responsibility before the world for that reason. And for that very same reason there are limits in this modern world to the destructiveness we can plan for, let alone use, and to the validity of the targets we might use on a contingency basis. We must not be coerced by technology, by so-called requirements, by custom or by precedent—the terrible precedent of the destruction of whole cities in World War Two, for example. The plans that we make in peace must reflect these principles. We must not plan or design for military actions which don't meet the standards of the United States. Our operations in war must have ethical restraints which go far beyond observing rules about prisoners and noncombatants. They must be based on the deepest springs of the ethical way in which we defend ourselves and those who trust and rely on us in the interest of freedom and peace, without crossing that borderline into methods unacceptable to civilized people.

It is our professional responsibility to prepare for war, but that is now made extraordinarily difficult. War is no longer properly considered an extension of



policy. Einstein said we have to change our way of thinking, and he was correct. We in the military, particularly, have to change our way of thinking. We must be effective in the service of the United States and its allies or we will have failed to do our duty. We must be humane or we will have failed humanity. How do we reconcile these demands? The only possible way to reconcile them is through *alert professionalism*. Officers today have totally unprecedented responsibilities. For example, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, when the world was really threatened with nuclear war, professionalism on the diplomatic, the political, and particularly the military side was extraordinary. The fact was that, while the nuclear balance was perceived to be near enough so that neither side was deterred, the outcome was determined by the capabilities of the Navy and the Air Force and the potential capabilities of the Army and Marines in that theater of operations.

Now let me talk about something very much before us at the present moment: NATO and the defense of Europe. Those of you who know land combat, those of you who have served in NATO, know some of the extreme disadvantages we face with respect to the armies of the Warsaw Pact. They're deployed forward and they're well armed. They're heavy in armor and skilled in combined arms tactics. To defend we have an alliance of fourteen nations under severe political and economic constraints. For many years we have yielded to the temptation to say, rightly or wrongly, that we can make up for our shortages and defend NATO countries with a first use of tactical nuclear weapons. Let's see what that implies. It implies, first, that the noncombatants who would surely be killed in their thousands, their tens of

thousands, maybe their hundreds of thousands, would be mostly German. That might deter the alliance at the outside. If not, the danger of escalation to total war would be very great. The USSR does not recognize the concept of limited nuclear war. They have said, explicitly, that if they get attacked with nuclear weapons they're going to come back in kind at a much higher level. The question will only be how fast the escalation takes place; whether it's one step, two steps, or three. Even if escalation to total nuclear war doesn't take place, we would still be the loser in a limited tactical nuclear exchange for the simple reason that we have a much smaller number of far more critical targets—airfields, ports, depots, assembly points—than the USSR and the Warsaw Pact. So the policy is a loser.

Now what has this got to do with ethics? It has this to do with ethics: military professionalism has already figured out how to defend Europe, without resorting to nuclear weapons, through such things as prepared defenses, coherent logistics support, air command and control, heavy anti-tank weapons, control of information, electronic warfare and intelligence. All these things we know how to get and how to do, and it is our collective responsibility to see they are brought into being.

Finally, in terms of the military usefulness of nuclear weapons, let's look at some examples, such as the Falkland Islands. Nobody doubts that Great Britain could have destroyed a dozen Argentine cities, including Buenos Aires, in a single blow. Obviously the British never considered such a thing although they have nuclear weapons and the Argentines do not. Those constraints, and like ones against gas, bacteria and many other things which science has made

available, must continue to obtain if we are going to remain civilized people. So we've got to be able to figure out how to do our jobs without resorting to nuclear weapons. Not at all incidentally, the Falklands conflict showed the central importance of leadership and morale. I think particularly of Colonel Jones leading his troops up against the defenders in fortifications. He bought it, but his troops won.

The lesson of this is that we must never paint ourselves into a corner in our planning and procurement so that some future commander is going to have to say, "I must use inhumane methods because I have nothing else." This displays a poverty of thought and an irresponsibility that no one should have on his conscience. I believe very strongly that we here in the United States have the special responsibility, because of our history and our dedication to freedom, to be, more than any other nation, conscious of the limitations on the great power we exercise. We must be humane and civilized. And both our foreign policy and our military policy must have moral content.

Now I'd like to talk for a minute about the responsibility of leaders for the people in their outfits. Napoleon had his shortcomings, but he also had his strengths. He had an expression, "tough on the big shots." In other words, "always take care of your people before you take care of yourself; always set the example." In the Naval Air Service the squadron commander is always first off the catapult and first into the target. That's a good tradition, and there are analogous traditions in all the services. This doesn't mean that the company commander must get himself shot. It does mean that he will take any reasonable risk to meet the objective that he asks any private to take. The responsibility that senior officers have to

hold their officers to this ethic is very important. The responsibility the junior officers have to hold on to this ethic is essential to their being good officers.

With regard to our responsibility for training and for readiness, there's a saying that sweat in peace saves blood in war. But it's not that easy. There are situations in which blood must be risked in order that there may be readiness. You might send your air wing out in the middle of a dark foggy night from an aircraft carrier in radio mission control. The pilots are risking their lives and you, the skipper, are responsible for their lives. But it's necessary. As I said, there are analogous things throughout the services: long-range, low-altitude missions in B-52s, underwater demolition team operations, and so forth. But it will be your responsibility as professionals to make sure that no stone is left unturned, if it is humanly possible, to get the necessary training without excessively risking your people.

Peacetime responsibilities are, in some curious ways, tougher than wartime responsibilities. I've served three tours in the Pentagon, and I have seen officers I know risked being shot, not once but many times, in wartime, running around those halls scared to death about some paper they were pushing, scared to death to move away from a party line, scared to death to take a position in opposition to what was popular. I'm not saying that everybody should be a maverick. I'm saying it will be your responsibility to speak up at the proper time and in the proper place, and not let what you think is wrong go by acclamation.

Turning our thinking to war, there are all sorts of war operations. There are well executed, smart ones, and there are poorly executed, dumb ones. In World

War One the cream of the young men of the countries engaged in that great European civil war, the Germans, the French, the British and the Russians, were slaughtered by generals who could think of nothing except sending them over the top into the barbed wire and the machine guns. They lost the absolute best of a generation. You can't be more incompetent than that. On this matter we should listen to Sun Tzu: "Figure out how to do things so that you get the maximum effect and least bloodshed."

I think of the operation that we called Linebacker II, very near the end of the Vietnam War, where the Air Force and the Navy went up to Hanoi and between us we cut off Hanoi from the outside. We never bombed the city itself except by accident. We did not bomb it on Christmas though it's been known as the Christmas bombing. But in eight and a half days of atrocious weather, Air Force and Navy pilots flying up against guided missiles shut the place down. And the most effective single part of that operation, perhaps the most effective military operation of the war, was the mining of Haiphong, which cut off supply utterly from the sea and had a curious characteristic—nobody got killed on either side. You can contrast that with Hamburger Hill and a lot of other places and you can see the difference. It was extraordinarily effective and produced no casualties. This is a tribute to military professionalism.

By contrast, for many years in Vietnam we had applied the efforts of two presidents, three secretaries of state and countless others in the notion of raising the ante, simply raising the threshold of pain, until the North Vietnamese would deal with us. Of course it didn't work, because it was so gradual, so telegraphed, so necessary for the Chinese and the

Russians, who were then allies, to raise the ante correspondingly or lose face before the communist world. All it did was keep escalating; all it did was kill a hell of a lot of people on both sides including a lot of noncombatants. It seems to me attrition tactics of that kind, generally, are profoundly unethical. If you can't figure out something better to do with a military force than to kill a lot of people and lose a lot of people in the hope that the other guy will get tired of the bloodletting before you do, you are not only not much of a leader, but you're not an ethical one, either.

Now let me talk about the most extraordinary military and ethical problem that the human race has ever faced—the existence and political use of many thousands of nuclear weapons. I don't know how familiar all of you are with nuclear weapons and their characteristics. I saw Hiroshima six days after it was hit. I participated in the second series of atmospheric bomb tests in the Pacific. I will say that it's a great pity that all of our leaders haven't seen these things go off. One hundred and ten kilotons seen from twenty-one miles away looks like the end of the earth. And makes an impression on you that you'll never forget and which nothing has prepared you for, nothing that you can read, nothing you can see in pictures. It's awesome, but it makes these ideas of throwing tens, hundreds or even thousands of nuclear weapons around seem to be the imaginings of people who in a very literal sense don't know what it is they are talking about. I did a couple of years on the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff and I was one of the executing commanders for the Los Alamos Laboratory for a number of years. I've participated in other nuclear-related operations. The more you see of these things,

the less you like them and the more you recognize that they have no sensible military purpose.

In point of fact, if we look at the history of the development of nuclear weapons we'll see that it's a history of shooting ourselves in the foot. I'm not criticizing those who developed nuclear weapons or those who employed them. This is Monday morning quarterbacking. But when we developed the atomic bomb, we developed the one thing that made it possible to attack the United States. Before that, with great oceans on either side, friendly neighbors north and south, the world's largest navy, the world's most effective air force, and a strong ground component, nobody could have come against us. And we invented the one thing that made it possible for people like Qaddafi and Khomeini to hold us at risk if they ever got hold of one.

Not content with that when the Russians, in four years (to our great astonishment), matched our achievement, we went to the H-bomb. We raised the ante by a factor of about a thousand and defense, which had been difficult before, became impossible. Then we developed the ability to reach Russia in its heartland and after a pause we got back the intercontinental ballistic missile and the warning time, which had been hours before, became minutes. Then we went for the submarine-launched ballistic missile, somewhat stabilizing the situation. And then the MIRV. Many warheads on one rocket. When that was matched, as it inevitably was by the USSR, it put our whole land-based force at risk.

We're heavy now with cruise missiles. And we're going to get heavier. And the great difficulty with them, despite their many virtues, is that they're going to be almost impossible to verify. And so we go. If we

raise the ante once more with nuclear weapons, in my judgment, we will find ourselves matched after a time by the Russians, and many billions of dollars and many billions of rubles later we will each be somewhat less secure than we are now.

What does all this tell us? It tells us, I think, that we should design our nuclear deterrence to bring the risk of nuclear war as close to zero as we can. I see no reason why we shouldn't sign off on "no first use." That would be more than a paper declaration, because it would eventually affect the physical equipment, deployment and doctrine of both sides. I see no reason why we shouldn't renounce the ideas of tactical nuclear war and counterforce, particularly with all the hair-trigger dangers they bring with them, because if you put your enemy's silos at risk, you give him a premium to shoot first or, as a minimum, to shoot on warning, uncertain though that may be. If we did that, if we designed our forces for minimum invulnerable necessary deterrence, then I think the world would be a lot safer and a lot more secure. The design of deterrence is something we should give much thought to. We have to understand what it is and how we create the frame of mind in the leadership in Russia that says, "No way, under no circumstances, no how, do we initiate a nuclear war." I think it requires, among other things, the profound study of the Russian military, Russian leadership and the Russian ethos. We haven't done enough of this yet.

My own hierarchy of deterrence starts with the lives of the Russian leadership (because they're human they don't want to get killed any more than any one else does), goes on to the control of the Communist party apparatus over the USSR, and finishes up with the military, the industry and the Russian



people. Even though I put the Russian people last in my hierarchy, I don't mean to discount their importance. I think we have to recognize that, in spite of the Communist party, the Russian people are the Russian people. They have enormous love and patriotism for Mother Russia. They don't want to see their country destroyed. So the deterrent we make should be designed to hold these things at risk, while being itself invulnerable.

I think it's right at this time to evaluate the potential for defense against nuclear attack, particularly the value of space defense against ballistic missile attack. I'm very sorry the subject has gotten such national attention, because I think it's hurrying down the wrong road. The schemes for defense from space are elaborate, but most of them are technically impractical to say the least. And all of them are militarily impractical from the standpoint of command and control in any realistic way. Let me illustrate some of the problems. One scheme proposes that you have lasers on the ground beaming from a mirror in space to a target some thousands of kilometers away. Well, in the first place, laser energy doesn't go through clouds. It's absorbed, defocused. If you had a clear day, you'd have to have many mirrors in orbit in order to have one in the right place. When your energy hits the mirror, a hundred percent of it won't be reflected. Some of this enormous energy will heat up the mirror and distort the focus. The accuracy we're talking about is a few microns; that is, about the width of my finger as seen from the airport. To engage in succession hundreds of missiles with this kind of accuracy from a number of presumably defocused mirrors presents a problem, and it's difficult to come up with any conceptual way

of solving it. Even if you do solve these problems, countermeans are pretty easy. Your enemy can put a mirror surface on his missiles. The laser energy reflects just as easily off such a surface as it does off a mirror. But maybe you put the laser up in space. You're talking about using many tons of fuel for each shot. And the satellite you'll need is a lot bigger, fatter, easier to hit and more expensive than the missiles it's out to destroy.

What about particle beams? Electron beams, proton beams. The problem with particle beams is that they're made of charged particles. They react against any magnetic field, and the earth puts out a pretty big magnetic field. So the particle beams don't go in straight lines. They move, instead, in a corkscrew spiral. Try to hit something with a corkscrew spiral! Could you strip them to get neutral energy beams? Conceivably, but nobody knows how to do it at the energies required.

Finally, what about the scheme heading these things with nuclear-pumped hot x-ray lasers? I'm talking about a nuclear explosive device in space that directs part of its energy in a particular direction in the form of hot x-rays. Well, the system obviously blows itself up. And, ultimately, you're going to have hundreds, maybe thousands, of nuclear weapons orbiting in space, not all of which you could identify.

Well, I could go on and on. But the notion that you're going to be able to operate one of these high-technology defenses, with its physical difficulties, its operational difficulties, perfectly the first time around in a massive defense plan defies the imagination. Now, some people are very fond of invoking science as a god and saying, gosh, you know, there were scientists who said the bumblebee couldn't fly,

that an atomic bomb was impossible, and whatnot, and surely, given enough time, enough money, enough support, we could solve these problems.

But it's not that kind of problem. It's a problem more like crime in the streets or drug abuse—it's not amenable to a scientific solution. As a matter of fact, it's very much like the anti-submarine problem that the Navy has struggled with for at least the forty-odd years I was in it. There's been a lot of money spent and a lot of scientific energy spent on that problem in those forty-odd years. And we're further behind now in defense against the modern submarine than we were when we started forty years ago. It's that kind of problem.

Well, there are two well-known psychological characteristics which prevent most people from addressing the problem of nuclear weapons. One is the problem of denial: this is just too bad, too tough to think about; I can't bear to think about it, so I'll think about something else. The other one is a feeling of helplessness: this is something only the experts understand, and they're the only ones who can do anything about it. Who am I to do anything about it? The military leaders facing the problem of nuclear weapons are not ethically entitled to these two excuses when considering the security of this country and the future of the world.

*Paul R. Viotti*

## **MORALITY IN TARGETING OBJECTS OF MILITARY VALUE: A RESPONSE**

**A**DMIRAL GAYLER'S COMMENTS on the linkage between professional competency and ethical responsibility are right on the mark. The imperative for competency in military commanders is stronger than in most other professions where, perhaps, fewer lives are at stake. Not only is the combat commander committed to accomplishing legitimate military objectives on the battlefield (a moral obligation in itself), but he is also responsible for minimizing loss of life of those under his command and for avoiding unnecessary death and destruction to civilian populations on either side. In addition, the commander has responsibilities toward his enemy on the battlefield, both in terms of the means he employs in combat and in his treatment of those he captures. Thus, the commander's moral obligation to accomplish legitimate military objectives—the mission—is constrained by these often competing moral responsibilities.

---

Colonel Viotti, USAF, is Professor and Deputy Head of the Department of Political Science at the US Air Force Academy. This article is reprinted from the US Air Force Academy *Journal of Professional Military Ethics*, August 1983.

Weighing alternative courses of action in view of these multiple responsibilities and making very hard choices are the commander's central tasks. Competency and moral responsibility thus merge as the defining characteristic of the *professional* soldier, particularly in his role as combat commander.

I have no quarrel with Admiral Gayler's skepticism concerning the feasibility of fighting and prevailing in (or winning) limited nuclear wars. The prospect of nuclear war, whether or not it could or would be "limited," seems too horrible to consider as a viable policy option. The part of his argument that troubles me, however, is his advocacy of a finite, invulnerable deterrent. He abhors the "terrible precedent of the destruction of whole cities in World War II," but then proceeds to support a force posture and targeting doctrine that would put civilian populations at greatest risk.

In their defense, advocates of counter-city targeting as the first line of deterrence argue that making the prospect of nuclear war so horrible minimizes its likelihood. On the other hand, one can question on practical grounds the feasibility of an *invulnerable*, finite deterrent, the credibility of counter-city threats and the consequent stability of the deterrent relation based on them. Leaving these issues aside, targeting civilian populations *per se* would seem difficult to justify militarily or morally.

If the military purpose in warfare is to defeat an enemy, this is done (following classic military prescriptions articulated by Clausewitz and others) by destroying or substantially weakening an enemy's war-making capability. In this regard, counter-city bombing during World War II failed to weaken enemy morale, which had been considered central to its warfighting capability. Rather than weaken the

will to resist, such bombing may have bolstered enemy resolve and thus may have been counter-productive militarily. As a first condition one must expect that the means used (or threatened and thus potentially used) in warfare would accomplish some valid military purpose if they are to have any chance of being moral. (Other conditions would include assuring proportionality between means used and ends sought and employing weapons that can be used discriminately and without causing needless suffering.) In any event, if military utility is a minimal requirement, then targeting doctrines with no (or even negative) military value cannot be justified morally.

While it is certainly true that civilian populations would suffer greatly in a nuclear war, regardless of targeting doctrine employed, advocating civilian population centers as the primary target is a prescription for nuclear Armageddon should deterrence break down for any reason. Objects for destruction (or threatened destruction) in warfare, regardless of weapon employed, should be the same; in nuclear as in conventional war, military activity should be directed toward eliminating or substantially weakening an enemy's war-making capability. Accordingly, nuclear targets should be those of military value to an adversary.

Given the proximity of such targets of military value to population centers, massive death and destruction would occur in any event. It is at least arguable, however, that the degree of suffering would be less if targets of military value were struck than if the targets were population centers *per se*. Of course, those who favor counter-city targeting as the first line of deterrence are quick to point out the dangers associated with targeting objects of military value to one's enemy. Indeed, one's intentions could be

perceived by an adversary as building a credible war-fighting posture, fueling an arms race, making the deterrence relation less stable and thus increasing the likelihood of war. On the other hand, when one considers the collateral death and destruction that both superpowers would experience in even a limited nuclear exchange, it is difficult to imagine how either would seriously entertain the notion that starting such a war would accomplish any useful purpose. In short, nuclear deterrence based on targeting objects of military value to an adversary would seem to be militarily viable and morally preferable to deterrence based on counter-city targeting.

Admiral Gayler also advocates a "no first use" pledge with respect to nuclear weapons. Given Soviet and Warsaw Pact superiority in numbers of many categories of non-nuclear weaponry, the United States and its NATO allies have relied on the threat of resort to nuclear weapons as a deterrent to the outbreak of war in Europe. Although the United States has persistently pressured its Allies to make much greater defense expenditures, there is little indication that the NATO allies have the political will (or, perhaps, capability) to bear the enormous economic costs associated with building a viable conventional deterrent, even if one were attainable. Building better conventional force capabilities and thus raising the nuclear threshold are certainly worthwhile goals, but we should not delude ourselves into thinking that such a force can be a substitute for ultimate reliance on nuclear weapons.

Forward defense coupled with the *threat* of resort to nuclear weapons should conventional defenses fail is central to deterrence in Europe. It is not surprising that the loudest protests against a "no

first use" pledge have come from the Germans who see the threat of early resort to nuclear weapons as essential to maintaining peace in Europe. For their part, Germans and other Europeans do not respond well to sometimes facile statements by their American friends about either limited nuclear or conventional warfighting options. Germans often say that they do not know who will win the next war in Europe—whether it is conventional or nuclear, but in either case they know who will be the loser. They will.



*Kenneth H. Wenker*

## MILITARY NECESSITY AND MORALITY

**F**IRST, IT IS CLEAR that not all institutional practices are specified in regulations and policies. In fact, the nonregulatory practices are often open to more abuse. They are not subject to periodic review. They are more ingrained and hence less easily changed. They often affect the whole environment in which the job is done, rather than just a specific task. For example, in my own office the junior officers are given a great deal of autonomy and not very much close, constant supervision. It could be different, of course; but the current institutional practice is deeply ingrained.

While most institutional practices we commonly reflect on are what we might call practices of action—the way we *do* things—others are conceptual practices—the way we think about things. So, for example, we talk about Air Force *doctrine*: an institu-

---

Colonel Kenneth H. Wenker, former Professor and Deputy Head of the Department of Philosophy and Fine Arts at the US Air Force Academy, is currently assigned at Maxwell Air Force Base. This essay was originally presented at the Fifth Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics, at National Defense University, January 1983, and published in the *US Air Force Academy Journal of Professional Military Ethics*, August 1983.

tionalized way of thinking. Or, for another example, we officially encourage not merely external compliance with nondiscrimination policies, but internal acceptance of the basic concepts behind such policies. The way we think about minorities and females is a *conceptual* institutional practice.

The institutional practice I am addressing in this paper is a nonregulatory, conceptual practice—an unofficial way of thinking.

The practice about which I am concerned is the practice of looking on “military necessity” as a practical, unavoidable, *nonmoral* need which is opposed to *moral* concerns which restrain us in the pursuit of our mission.

Thus we quite commonly hear persons taking this line of thought: “I’m sick and tired of the bleeding heart moralists telling us how to fight a war! War is hell! The bottom line is that, moral or immoral, nice or rotten, you’ve got to win. Don’t let morality stand in the way of victory. Nice guys finish last, after all. And while we might be able to accept that in sports or in business, we cannot accept it in war. The cost is too high. The moral must yield to necessity.”

Or, from the other end of the spectrum, one might hear: “I’m sick and tired of the generals wanting to orphan little kids and blow half the enemy population to smithereens, all in the name of victory. We must begin to understand that our country has no alternative but to commit ourselves to the moral. The moral is of supreme importance, and it must win out over the merely practical. Being right is more important than the glory of victory.”

The problem with both extremes is that both portray the problem as a tension between the moral and

the (nonmoral) practical. The truth is that, as with most significant problems, the tension is really between two conflicting moral needs. It is not a question of deciding whether the moral or the nonmoral will win out in the end. It is a question of deciding whether one real, legitimate moral concern or a conflicting real, legitimate moral concern should win out in a particular situation at a particular time.

The heart of the issue is that we have an institutional practice—an erroneous institutional practice—of looking at “military necessity” as nonmoral, but practical, demand. This is a terrible mistake. Let me explain.

I am assuming that, should our country go to war, there is a moral goal, a moral intention, a moral end in mind. Furthermore, the moral end at stake is of very high importance. It is so important to us—so morally important to us—that we are willing to put our own lives and the lives of those we love on the line in order to attain that moral end. The moral end is so important that we believe it is worth tremendous expense, tremendous destruction, and tremendous interruption of our normal lifestyles.

If the war is to attain such an important moral end, then it becomes morally important as a means to that end that we in fact win the war—not necessarily in the sense of militarily crushing the enemy, but rather in the sense of achieving the moral end for which the war is fought.

“Military necessity,” simply put, is that which is necessary or useful for attaining the moral end for which the war is fought. And because it is the means to a moral end, it becomes morally important.

This does not mean that it automatically overrides other, conflicting moral concerns. After all, the fact that an end is morally important does not justify

any means that might be useful or necessary to attain it. Tough moral decisions are still necessary. In fact, our own regulations give only the general principles, putting the responsibility for moral decision making in specific situations squarely on the commander's shoulders.

To summarize my point: our institutional practice of looking at "military necessity" as a nonmoral element is wrong. Military necessity is in fact a legitimate moral concern.

Having pointed out the institutional practice of erroneously viewing military necessity as a nonmoral rather than a moral concern, the next task is to show that this institutional practice leads to ethical problems which are more than theoretical.

As I see it, this institutional practice has two very real and very dangerous implications. The first is that it leads to an attitude that ethics is not all that important. The second is that it is one part of a more general failing. That failing is our all-too-frequent lack of awareness of real ethical problems. Let me explain each of these.

If we are prepared to put morality aside in favor of the "practical" in one situation, then we will be prepared to set it aside for the practical in other situations. While in the case of military necessity the "practical" is indeed a real moral concern, in other cases the "practical" might be merely such things as promotions, status, or other egoistic concerns. I do believe that the practice of looking at military necessity as being opposed to and more important than morality supports whatever tendency one might have to put moral concerns second to other concerns.

The other problem the erroneous understanding of military necessity contributes to is a failure to really be aware of, and sensitive to, moral concerns.

The vast majority of persons I've been associated with in our armed services are genuinely good people, concerned about doing what they judge to be right, and committed to doing as well as they can even under adversity. Further, to a somewhat lesser extent, but still far beyond what you could ask of any group of human beings, they bring some pretty good attitudes, values, experiences, and reflection to their moral judgments. When they see that they are in a situation which calls for a moral judgment, they are usually quite capable of doing well in making those judgments. To put it more to the point, most of my associates in the armed services do make good moral judgments and follow them, provided they do realize that they are in a situation which calls for a moral judgment.

It's that last clause that causes a problem: "provided they do realize that they are in a situation which calls for a moral judgment." It seems to me that the ethical failings in the armed services are not found primarily in people who do what they judge to be wrong. Nor is it found primarily in people who make poor judgments about right and wrong. Rather, it is found in the fact that too many of us often fail to see that the problems we deal with on a daily basis are in fact ethical problems. We don't make *bad* ethical judgments, but all too often we make no ethical judgment and all—at least not consciously. And, in practice, this means that we adopt solutions to our ethical problems without the ethical reflection they demand.

Let me illustrate my point with a personal confession of my own shortcomings in this regard.

Several years ago—longer than I care to admit—as a very junior captain I found myself the Chief of Maintenance of a large maintenance function of some 500 electronics technicians spread over all of north-east Turkey. I was really too young and inexperienced to do the job as well as it deserved. One of my shortcomings was that I was overly impressed with the computer products generated by the Maintenance Data Collection System. I naively believed there was a direct, one-to-one relationship between the various statistics and the quality of the skills, efforts, and leadership of myself and the noncommissioned officers. If we met all the numerical standards, we were doing well. If we fell short in any area, we were doing poorly and had significant problems which had to be corrected.

After a few short months I started to notice the statistics for our high frequency transmitter shop beginning to deteriorate. So I called in the NCOIC; and even though he was doing an excellent job under unusually difficult circumstances, I let him know that he had to do better so that the maintenance data would reflect his good work. I put a lot of pressure on him. After a few days I noticed a near-miraculous improvement in the maintenance data. *Every* preventive maintenance routine was done on time. And if the tech order indicated a procedure should take twenty minutes, then it took somewhere between eighteen and twenty-two minutes. The failure rate dropped to near zero, and the time to repair was invariably what the tech order suggested as appropriate. In short, the NCOIC was lying by manipulating the data on the input cards.

He meant well, I'm sure; he just wanted to get this dumb captain off his back over trivia, so that he

could continue to do the "real" work as well as he could. The problem was with the dumb captain. He was so naive that he didn't even realize what was going on. He thought the NCOIC had simply tightened up the shop a bit, so that the maintenance really did improve. The problem was not that the captain did what he thought wrong. The problem was that the captain didn't even see the moral implications of what he was doing. He didn't have the slightest suspicion that his "purely practical" decision was in reality an ethical decision.

I believe that the biggest ethical problem we face is that many persons are not alert to the moral implications of their decisions. Most significant decisions that an officer makes are ethical decisions: they affect human beings and their lives and lifestyles; they seek the most effective ways to defend crucial, fundamental national values; they involve resolving tensions between conflicting values. Nonetheless, all too often we look upon our decisions as either outside the scope of moral thinking or as so "practical" or "necessary" as to overrule moral concerns.

For example, a commander might think, "I have no choice. I simply *must* demand that we get this report out even if my troops have to work late on Christmas Eve to do it. Yes, I know there is a moral concern to nourish family life and keep families together, especially at this time of year. But in this case we can't afford the luxury of the moral. We must yield to the practical instead."

In this example, the commander naively believes that the decision to be made is a practical one and not a moral one. But he's just fooling himself. He's really making a *moral* decision, a decision that is *not* between the moral and the practical, but rather between

two conflicting moral concerns. The one, of course, is the need to support close family relationships. The other is the moral value attached to the successful accomplishment of the mission and to his own sense of doing well; presumably getting the report finished will lead to the attainment of certain important values with some degree of immediacy and certainty. What the commander is *really* doing is weighing the moral need to support close family relationships against the moral importance of the mission and the relation of this particular report to the success of the mission. The root problem illustrated by the example is not that the commander made a poor moral decision but rather that he didn't even realize there was a moral decision to be made.

The subject of this conference has to do with "institutional practices which lead to ethical abuse." One kind of such institutional practice lies in our tendency to present certain kinds of problems as being conflicts between the practical and the moral. In reality, they are conflicts between differing moral concerns. By misrepresenting this conflict, we erroneously teach people that, in the end, morality is not all that important, since it so often must yield to the practical. Ultimately this leads to our not really being committed to morality; we become committed instead to satisfying whatever pressures happen to seem unavoidable. Morality becomes of secondary importance. It becomes "nice-to-have" or optional or dispensable. And as long as this attitude dominates, we will never bring about that kind of character so necessary to our armed forces: a character that refuses to put morality second to anything.



*Joseph V. Potter*

## WAR GAMES

**O**NE QUALITY that is absolutely essential in a professional Air Force pilot is disciplined airmanship. Not only does this trait help insure safety of flight and enhance a pilot's chances for survival in combat, it contributes immeasurably to the successful outcome of any mission. For example, that mission may call for an "o-dark-thirty" takeoff in marginal weather. To accomplish this maneuver wingmen of a flight of aircraft must hang on to the lead aircraft with only a wingtip light in sight, vertigo pulling on every sense. In this situation a pilot often experiences muscle cramps from straining to hold the tight formation. In addition, he may have to penetrate through heavy enemy groundfire dodging missiles and heavy automatic weapons fire. Also, while facing possible engagement with enemy aircraft, he must precisely employ his weapons against heavily defended targets. Finally, there is the long, bone-weary flight back to

---

Colonel Potter, 15th Air Base Wing Vice Commander, Hickham Air Force Base, served at the Air Force Academy as Chief of the Airmanship Division and Director of Plans, Policy, and Scheduling for the Commandant of Cadets. His essay is from the US Air Force Academy *Journal of Professional Military Ethics*, December 1982.

base that requires critical air-to-air refueling and a precision landing with a possibly damaged aircraft or partially incapacitating wounds.

From a perspective where airmanship skills are viewed as determining life or death, all the "rules and regulations" of flying make crystal clear sense. Rules that state that an aircrew must have adequate crew rest, avoid self-medication, conduct thorough pre-flight inspections, prepare detailed crew briefings, and execute meticulous flight planning are all vital elements in what I call disciplined airmanship. In our day-to-day training environment, however, we often tend to lose sight of the purpose behind regulations and may find convenient ways to short-cut the system quite successfully or bend the rules so as to "break the monotony" of what on the surface appear as nuisance requirements or unnecessary details. This attitude of avoiding rules or disregarding them is dangerous, since it will lull an inexperienced, naive pilot into a false sense of security and complacency.

While the temptation is great for many pilots to rebel against flying discipline by doing such things as break formation, buzz houses, skim mountain peaks and lakes, chase cattle, fly underneath anything that has daylight under it, and a million other "hot dog" tactics, the wise, professional pilot should quickly develop a realization that his actions affect the general state of airmanship discipline in his squadron as well as reflect his personal commitment to professionalism. At the Air Force Academy, each officer's attitude and actions are clearly signalled to cadets, and a lax, carefree manner could be easily emulated by impressionable young students. More importantly, a lax, complacent attitude, if absorbed by cadets, could lead to catastrophic consequences for them

when they later become pilots. Professional, ethical conduct then is especially imperative for officers and leaders at the Academy, both on and off duty. The following three examples may help illustrate my point.

While I was still a young pilot with an undeveloped sense of discipline, and because of peer pressure, complacency, inexperience, and naivete, I courted danger needlessly and stacked the odds precariously against myself. For example, as one of six Forward Air Controllers (FACs) stationed at Phouc Vinh, Vietnam, in 1967 with the 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, we pilots shared the danger, fear, frustration, loneliness and hardships of combat together. By flying two or three times a day, seven days a week, we rapidly built an intimate knowledge of the terrain, enemy movements and potential targets. When not involved in actual battle, providing air cover for friendly troop operations, or directing airstrikes against preplanned targets, we were free to actively seek out the enemy, develop intelligence indicators, or engage in "war games," a few of which I describe below.

**Rang-Rang.** Buried deep in the triple canopied jungle of War Zone D stood an old abandoned airstrip: Rang-Rang. Legend had it that the airstrip had been abandoned by the French after the Viet Minh decimated a defending Vietnamese Ranger battalion and stacked their bodies, like firewood, on the runway. The object of our contest was to see who would be the first FAC to accomplish a "touch and go" landing at Rang-Rang. The runway was deeply rutted, which could easily flip an O-1 Bird Dog FAC air-

craft, and ground fire from the surrounding jungle was always heavy whenever we made low passes. Although I made many passes one or two feet above the ground, I never touched down (nor did any other FAC), but I did pick up a lot of bullet holes in the process.

**Porkchop.** Located deep in the jungle of War Zone D was a small clearing in the shape of a porkchop. Just into the treeline stood a rather large thatch-roofed structure that held enemy supplies. The structure was part of an occupied base camp and the camp was heavily defended. The object of our "Porkchop" game was to see who would be the first FAC to burn down the "hootch." The rules prohibited firing white phosphorous (WP) rockets from a safe distance and altitude. The only "approved method" of destroying the hootch was to pull the pin on a WP hand grenade, hold it out the pilot's window, dive at a steep angle, and try to lob it across the clearing into the front opening of the hootch while flying as low and as fast as possible, and then to escape from the inevitable hail of ground fire by skimming the treetops. The grenade would usually explode harmlessly or burn only a short time against the monsoon rain-soaked sides of the structure. My near downfall came one day when, determined to win, I decided to make a second pass. This time enemy gunners had me bracketed with crossfire between two 50-caliber machine gun emplacements as I started my dive holding a grenade out the window. Fiery red baseballs grazed my plane as I continued the dive and somehow escaped just above the trees.

**Trust Your Crew Chief.** The rules of this game called for the pilot to disregard his preflight inspection completely, thus demonstrating "trust" in a crew chief and monumental stupidity at the same time. One fine day, after demonstrating my trust, I spotted a squad of enemy soldiers at the end of a long reconnaissance flight. I pinned them down on the trail with several rockets while simultaneously calling up an artillery fire mission. While flying a semi-circular horseshoe pattern, I began adjusting the artillery impacts until they were "zeroed in." Just as I gave the command "Fire for effect!," my engine sputtered and coughed to a stop. With inaccurate float type fuel gauges, we flew by time of flight (usually four hours) and I had just calculated another 30 minutes of fuel remaining. I frantically switched fuel tanks (although the first tank was already empty) and activated a fuel boost pump, but it was too late. The crew chief had inadvertently failed to top off the fuel tanks after performing a preflight engine run-up test and I demonstrated "trust" by not checking to see that they were full prior to takeoff. I called "Mayday, Mayday!" as the plane glided toward the jungle. If I survived the crash through 300-foot trees, the welcoming committee would consist of the same troops that I had just placed artillery fire on. There were no options left; I sat stunned and motionless watching the jungle rise up closer and knowing that this was where I would die. Only a few seconds from the top of the trees, the engine miraculously caught, coughed and began running! I pulled sharply up and toward my base and, as the artillery fire continued, limped and sputtered somehow back to base. As I touched down on the runway, the prop finally stopped completely and I rolled to a silent stop.

I could relate many more episodes similar to the ones above but their point is the same: the values of individual professionalism, responsibility, integrity, and leadership are learned attributes of character developed through personal experiences, repeated exposure to positive role models, and habitual practice. Ample opportunities are provided to members of the Academy community to help develop these attributes in cadets through personal involvement with them and by setting an example. These characteristics are extremely valuable as they will be instrumental in helping young officers avoid situations (such as my "war games") that needlessly jeopardize lives and equipment.

One does not have to point to the extremes of war to find such situations. Impressionable young cadets, emulating their favorite squadron participant, sponsor, AOC, or activity advisor demonstrating macho drinking bouts or reckless behavior can perceive a wrong communication of professional behavior. Obedience and adherence to the "regs," proper decorum, and loyalty up and down the chain of command are not principles that require rigid, lock-step regimentation. Instead, the principles these terms represent reaffirm the practical utility which personal integrity, professional responsibility, and leadership provide for military organizations. Disciplined airmanship results from psychological and ethical patterns of thought and behavior developed through day-to-day practice. High standards in any organization reflect and support high standards among all its members. Increasing awareness and attention to military bearing and courtesy, participation in unit, base, youth and cadet activities, active professional reading, using seatbelts,

moderate drinking (no one said it would be easy), plus many other patterns of behavior contribute to the development of a military professional. These behavior patterns also serve as positive signals transmitted daily to cadets, NCOs and subordinate officers.

Whether assigned to the USAF Academy, a missile base, a tanker squadron or a research laboratory, you will be expected to live by a high ethical code. Anything less undermines the standards of a professional organization. Deviation from those standards will have a significant impact on young, developing cadets, lieutenants, NCOs or civilian co-workers watching from the sidelines. Perhaps your example will be the key ingredient that will prevent that individual from engaging in "war games" in the future.

*William E. McCarron*

## ON MACHIAVELLI AND VIETNAM

**N**EAR THE CENTER of Europe's foremost Renaissance city, Florence, stands a magnificent Franciscan church, the Basilica of Santa Croce. Beneath its pointed Gothic arches it houses one monument and three tombs: a monument to Dante and the tombs of Michelangelo, Galileo, and Machiavelli. Whether by design or accident, it is a momentous place, for if one were to single out four men who laid the cornerstone for Renaissance man's rebirth in literature, art, science, and politics, it would be these four men.

Perhaps the least understood of these "four horsemen" of the Renaissance is Niccolo Machiavelli. The most influential of his works is a short, singular treatise called *The Prince*. Rather than arguing, as all of his predecessors had, that the science of ruling and warring is an idealistic philosophical one of moral precepts, of what "should be" and "ought to be," Machiavelli detailed the reality of what he saw around

---

Lieutenant Colonel McCarron, USAF, now retired, was Associate Professor of English at the US Air Force Academy. His essay is reprinted from the US Air Force Academy *Journal of Professional Military Ethics*, August 1982.



AD-A187 042

MILITARY ETHICS: REFLECTIONS ON PRINCIPLES - THE  
PROFESSION OF ARMS MILIT. (U) NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIV  
WASHINGTON DC M M MARIN ET AL. SEP 87

3/3

UNCLASSIFIED

F/G 3/9

NL

END

DATE

FORMED

8-7

1·0

2·8

2·5

3·15  
3·5  
4·0  
4·5

3·15

3·5

4·0

4·5

2·2

2·0

1·8

1·1

1·25

1·4

1·6

him in the Italian city states of Renaissance Italy, an articulation of "what was" and "what was likely to go on." Thus, if Machiavelli saw (as he did see) a Prince Sforza of Milan taking harsh and sometimes ultimate measures against his newly-captured enemies, Machiavelli told what Sforza did.

An unfortunate aspect of Machiavelli's rather simple documentary and commentary was that it was misinterpreted. When Machiavelli wrote how Sforza, or Cesare Borgia, or Pope Julius treated their enemies, their behavior was taken as a model of what "should be" done by his precocious but admiring readers. Though not all of Europe's monarchs and princes forgot their heritage of Christian morality and took Machiavelli exactly at his word, many of the Renaissance playwrights did.

On the Renaissance stage, therefore, villains who perpetrated bloody crimes with no apparent motives were given the name "Machiavel." On the stage virtuous women were symbolically plundered, maidens had their tongues plucked out, and innocent men had their brains dashed against the sides of cages, all in the name of "Machiavel." English Elizabethan theater audiences viewed a procession of villainous Machiavels who seemed preoccupied with consummate atrocity, including characters like Marlowe's rapacious Jew of Malta and Shakespeare's Iago who besmirches an innocent Desdemona and drives his faithful military superior, Othello, into epileptic fits and eventual suicide.

One can easily point to the atrocities that occurred in Vietnam, atrocities practiced by both sides, and use the label "Machiavel" to characterize the war's various villains—some Vietcong, some NVA, some South Vietnamese, and some American. And, without the redeeming value of splendid art, culture,

and literature which graced the Renaissance, Vietnam resembled Renaissance Italy in many ways with its French and Spanish mercenaries. Not only was Vietnam long and angular and dotted with hills and changing geography, but the mercenaries were there also, such as Pathet Lao infiltrators, Australian flying troops, and South Korean "ROKs." Yes, there were villains and "Machiavels" in Vietnam, atrocities and horrors to shake even the most steadfast and optimistic Candide. But to say, even imply, that the long, steadfast, protracted stageplay of Vietnam was nothing but gruesome "Machiavellian" horror would be an exaggeration, and it would also misrepresent the essential theme of Machiavelli's *The Prince*.

Machiavelli's short treatise on political science and warfare is no mere catalogue of villainous acts. It is a textbook commentary, long on examples, and short on conclusions. Machiavelli points out the traits and habits of mind of those princes, Greek and Roman, as well as Renaissance Italian, who won and lost wars. In *The Prince* Machiavelli concludes, time after time, that it takes energy and power to win a battle, hold a territory, or claim lasting victory in a war. At the very end of his treatise, Machiavelli discards that worn out strumpet, Dame Fortune, on whom the classical and medieval princes had blamed their downfall, and he says that men, modern princes, must take full responsibility for victory or failure in warfare:

My conclusion is, then, that, as fortune is variable and men fixed in their ways, men will prosper as long as they are in tune with the times and will fail when they are not. However, I will say that in my opinion it is better to be bold than cautious, for fortune is a woman and whoever wishes to win her must importune and beat her, and we may observe that she is more frequently won by this sort

than by those who proceed more deliberately. Like a woman, too, she is well disposed to young men, for they are less circumspect and more violent and more bold to command her.

Though it would be impetuous and improbable simply to use Machiavelli's *The Prince* as a guide for judging events in Vietnam, some things he says are applicable to war, such as his injunction for leaders to be "in tune with the times," be "bold rather than cautious," and be "disposed toward young rather than old men." In Vietnam, the common footsoldier, airman, marine, and sailor, as well as their princely commanders, were in tune with the latest rock beat but they were not in tune with the huge, 40-year war that had dominated the history of modern Vietnam. And in Vietnam audacious actions were confined to occasional night patrols and assaults; for the most part, we sat in an enclosed area and waited for the war to come to us. In Vietnam, the decisions of immediate import were, of course, made in the heat of battle, but the philosophy of war, the underlying principles of battle, were made in buildings half a world away by men more interested in counting bodies than in the objectives of winning and holding ground, of engaging and beating an enemy, and of establishing and maintaining a just and lasting peace.

This is not to say that older men, sitting in deliberation in another hemisphere, were to blame. This is not to say, either, that Machiavelli's treatise of what Renaissance military leaders actually did should have been a guidebook for conducting operations in Southeast Asia. It does mean, though, that there should have been a commitment to winning the war, not at all costs, surely, but there should have been a goal firmly in mind at all times. In not having such a

clear goal, we deceived ourselves. Ironically, we dealt, ever increasingly, with the reality of *what was*, that is the stopping of a guerrilla war through sporadic action and momentary aggression and shortsighted objectives controlled by the immediate circumstances, while we gradually abandoned our mission of *what should have been* in Vietnam, a vision predicated on a bold commitment to free a nation from unwarranted external aggression.

If military power means having more firepower than the enemy, then we had it. If military power means controlling the airspace for 10 years over a war-torn country, then we did it. If military power means control of seaports, straight-in routes to bomb enemy supply areas in the North, and the ability to sweep an area and control it, we had all of this if we wanted. Instead, we were cautious rather than bold, we listened to procrastination from politicians rather than the pleas of battlefield commanders, and we were naively attentive to the ideals of peace and good will to all men, no matter who mouthed those ideals so as to mask their real intentions.

So, very simply, we lost the war. Not in a savage and bitter retreat from a stronger enemy; not because we didn't speak an Oriental tongue nor understand an Oriental heart; not in disgrace; not even in dishonor. We simply decided not to win.

Old, staid soldiers encamped on foreign soil, cautious as old maids at a debutante's ball, we danced to the enemy's tune. We were 55 days at Peking in the Boxer Rebellion drawn out to ten long years; we were the designers of our own Maginot Line, now with sandbags and concertina wire instead of fortified bunkers and an enemy who employed occasional

*blitzkriegs* and then withdrew leaving us to lick our wounds and wonder why; we were the French implanted in a miniature string of Dien Bien Phus, but with all the ability to break out and the dedication to do so—yet we never did. We were Da Nang and Pleiku, Phan Rang and Cam Ranh Bay, Bien Hoa and Tan Son Nhut, Long Binh and Can Tho and we made the country a miniature America, from the DMZ in the north (the California-Oregon border) to Cape St. Jacques in the South (Tijuana) and looking toward the southern Pacific. We had our “cities” our towns, firebases, and outposts. We were civilization, urban power, men, might, fortitude, power, and directness: all self-contained and all isolated. Or so we believed.

We had beer and soft drinks in aluminum cans while Charles had handfuls of rice and grain. We had hootches, entertainment, and electricity while Charles had the tunnels and villages of the hinterlands by night and by day. We had sleek jets, sleek riverine craft, and armored personnel carriers while Charles had bicycles, infiltrators, and carriers of satchel charges. And Charlie Cong, bless his enduring soul, outwaited his powerful Uncle Samuel and claimed the California-sized country for his own. Charlie stuck to his native soil and his Uncle returned to his.

It is not that Charles and the North Vietnamese had a will and a way and we did not. We had a will and a way, too. The difference between us was a result of strategy, theirs a bold and steady guerillaism, a war of destruction, as opposed to our cautious and restrained democratic warfare, a war of preservation. You cannot build and bolster and preserve when the enemy is laying satchel charges around your foundation. Fear and the cut throat of a village elder at night

*Part V*

# EDUCATING THE CITIZEN-SOLDIER





are more compelling to a village of Vietnamese than packets of medicine and reassurances which were handed out from a daylight patrol. Fear, and the instinct for survival are more basic instincts than those which the promises of safety and new crops and an eventual national democratic government can generate.

On the whole, we conducted a gentleman's war in Vietnam. We were the Hessian troops in Trenton while Charles and his cohorts crossed the Delaware on Christmas Eve and raised general havoc every night. We were always open and available. Charles was always secretive and, like Major Major in *Catch-22*, always "in" when we were "out" and always "out" when we were "in."

We were kind and thoughtful warriors. When it was a question of a free-fire zone, we called the province chief and checked and found out, an hour later, that we could indeed drop ordnance—a half hour after Charlie had vacated the area. When we flew north over the DMZ, we watched the SAM sites under construction, but only bombed those that were operational. When it was time to sit down and discuss cessation of hostilities in Paris, we modern knights of Camelot engaged in an argument about the shape of the table and the composition of the negotiating teams who would be allowed to sit as representatives of the parties involved in the conflict rather than bringing the force of arms to bear.

We were cautionary men who were in Vietnam sixteen times in sixteen years. Coming, staying for a year, rotating home, and maybe coming back a year or two later. Aging and growing old in spirit as each year wound into the next. Training, urging, leading, advising, trying to build a South Vietnamese nation

while the enemy was raiding, coercing, terrorizing, ordering at gunpoint, and destroying whatever served his purpose, no matter what the cost. We had the best-trained, best-equipped armed force in the world and, in my deepest heart, I believe we still do. But in Vietnam, we followed a conservative strategy that only aimed to maintain a holding pattern. We looked for only those things which it is polite for visitors to see. We played the role of *turista*: observe the local customs, be nice to the permanent residents, and respect the rights of others.

Yes, I hope we will respect the rights of others, and I hope we continue to be nice to permanent residents and to observe their customs. After all, these are the ideas we cherish for ourselves and we don't have to turn into rapacious "Machiavels" to make the end of our policy justify our means. But we must also be young men who are bold when in war rather than old men hoping we don't lose, and we must be willing to do our job as residents rather than as tourists. To preserve the heritage of *Santa Croce*, to allow Dante to be read, Michelangelo to be admired, and Galileo to be studied, we must not surrender ourselves to fate and fortune, but, as young princes, we must pursue the spirit but not the letter of Niccolo Machiavelli. If we fail to commit ourselves to winning future wars, then we will have only ourselves to blame or, like Machiavelli's predecessors, we can simply and blindly blame that fickle woman, Dame Fortune.

*Alfred Kern*

## LITERARY PERCEPTION OF THE AMERICAN MILITARY

**L**IKE PAINTERS under the Medicis, I am one of a legion of American writers whose lives have been lived within the protective walls of the university. If we venture out from time to time—perhaps a bit more often than our scholar-colleagues—we also come scurrying back. Within the gates, we enjoy both the status and advantage of difference. Hence, I have never really produced scholarship—not the kind which is characterized by constructively diminished intentions. For this occasion, I have been compelled to consider some writers and books under an acutely circumscribed rubric—literary perceptions of the military. Of course, I had more than a notion of what I would find; still a reconsideration of these books has produced findings which are inescapably bleak for the military.

In twentieth century American literature, the professional military (both the institution and the

---

This paper was read in April 1980 before a National Defense Colloquium sponsored by the US Air Force Academy History Department. Reprinted from the US Air Force Academy *Journal of Professional Military Ethics*, November 1980.

individuals who belong to it) is criticized, suspected, feared, and not infrequently identified as the enemy. A quick survey of books from World War I to the present—sixty years—supports this assertion almost without exception. For WWI, John Dos Passos' *One Man's Initiation: 1917, Three Soldiers*, and the war chapters in *USA*, emphasize the misbehavior of the American military almost to the exclusion of the German army. Dos Passos' three soldiers—an Indiana farm boy, a West Coast fisherman, and an aspiring composer—are destroyed by their own military establishment, the writer's protest being aimed at the people who wear American uniforms with the Kaiser's forces only catalytic if not incidental. E. E. Cummings' *The Enormous Room* is an early outcry against the blindness and self-aggrandizements of military bureaucracy. In *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway's description of the retreat from Caporetto still stands as some of our finest writing about war. In that novel, when Lt. Henry leaps into the Tagliamento River, he does so to save his life from paranoid carabinieri who are shooting anybody who speaks Italian with a foreign accent. However, once safely behind his own lines, Henry never returns; he deserts the army and the cause.

We might have expected a different reaction by our writers to WWII. Thirty-five years later, we refer to WWII as America's "last good war," a phrase which soldiers use in the context of historical judgment, "the last good war" being a distinction among the century's generational experiences in war and neither nostalgia nor the secret yearnings of middle-age war-lovers. And yet, the difference between the literature of those two wars is thematically slight. Reading *From Here to Eternity*, the reader knows

that James Jones cared for the military—for soldiers—above his other cares; yet it is the professional military at its worst that destroys Private Prewitt. In *The Young Lions*, Irwin Shaw does show us the savage genocide practiced by Nazi Germany, but we also see a nasty if less cataclysmic anti-semitism tolerated within the American army. In *The Naked and the Dead*, Norman Mailer characterizes General Cummings as intelligent and well-mannered, an effective if unlucky senior commander, but Cummings is also power-mad, a sophisticated American fascist with Sgt. Croft as Cummings' physical, uneducated, and brutish accessory. Of *Catch-22*, a book of special meaning to the Air Force, I shall say only that it impresses me as a novel about WWII but not really of it; written during the fifties, the book seems more a consequence of Heller's reaction to cold war politics, the humorous but pervasive sense of doom being the reaction of a vital spirit to what the United States was then doing as much or more than to what we had already done.

James Gould Cozzens may well be the one conservative exception to our literary liberalism. As Cozzens read history and wrote his own books, he did not believe that any of us had been promised our heart's darling whether that heart's darling was fame or fortune or peace or Scott Fitzgerald's golden girl. Hence, the Cozzens canon places higher value on the integrity of institutions than the fulfillment of individuals. In *Guard of Honor*, Cozzens builds bridges between the professional military and civilian America just as he did between the clergy and the laity in *Men and Brethren* and the courts and the public in *The Just and the Unjust*. If his big seller, *By Love Possessed*, was overpraised at the time of its publication,

his work is undervalued, perhaps because he understood that despite our glory and resiliency, the American system is curiously fragile and dare not be taken for granted. Yet, I must also point out here that American ebullience, humor, ingenuity, and constructive madness are lacking in Cozzens' novels. He approved the decision of his ancestors—pre-revolutionary Tories—to sit out the American Revolution in Canada while the upstart and anti-traditional colonists fought for political liberty. One can only infer that for Cozzens even the enlightened conservatism of Burke was intolerably liberal.

The Korean war did not inspire a comparable literature. Richard Kim's *The Martyred* is deserving and—of course—Michener produced his Korean book, *The Bridges of Toko-Ri*. Vietnam remains in the literary throes, but if Philip Caputo's *A Rumor of War* is an indication of what is to come, the professional military will be even more severely condemned by the Vietnam generation of writers. The Caputo memoir—both confession and apology—is disturbingly powerful, for Caputo argues (not always unconvincingly) that his own acts of atrocity were in the dutiful service of an atrocious war atrociously commanded. Ironically, our performance in Vietnam seems the worse for the very fact that Caputo does show us the fierce and unappealing face of the enemy.

Using these and other books, I have inferred a number of generalizations which are typical of our writers' perceptions of the military. First, the American military is as illiberal as American writers are liberal. At its domestic bases, the military followed local custom—hence has been less than enthusiastic about those realizations of the constitutional franchise which have concerned the Congress and the

Court for the past half-century. Unsympathetic to other collectives—labor unions especially—the military identifies with corporate leadership and corporation mentality despite the fact that under George Meany, the trade union movement probably was the military's strongest political ally since the first days of the cold war years. The military is sentimental about its heroes but distrustful of individuality. If consigned by duty to the view that the Soviet Union is America's one and only political reality, the military seems predisposed to live contentedly within that monomania. In sum, American writers have perceived the military establishment as having opposed some of the very ideas and ideals for which civilian soldiers have gone to fight.

I ask no one to accept either the correctness or justice of such perceptions—only that I have read these books attentively and summarized accurately. Now, what is the professional military to make of all this? What options are available for reaction or response? Of course, hurt feelings are one possibility, and Kipling can be invoked in such moments: "For it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, 'and chuck him out, the brute!' But it's Saviour of 'is country when the guns begin to shoot." And there's truth in that, truth also in the fact that Kipling was a good poet even before T. S. Eliot told college professors it would be all right for them to praise a Kipling poem. But for one reason or another, most of us have already discovered that hurt feelings prove a poor base for creating policy or living life.

On his recent visit to the Academy, General Curtis LeMay demonstrated another option. At the appropriate moment, he merely grunted, "Left liberals," and went on to the next point. If I knew that General

LeMay might well be referring to me, I liked him nonetheless. I liked him because he believes that wars are better deterred but once engaged in better won than lost. I liked him because he is more concerned with fact than fancy. Seemingly indifferent to image—at least now in his sacred relic phase—like George Patton himself the out-sized characterization fully achieved, General LeMay could be a P.I.O.'s dream *and* nightmare. Finally—and mostly—I liked the Old Man because I know that he would accept my understanding and respect for him as wholly appropriate without the slightest inclination to reciprocate.

I would tell General LeMay that I have my own reservations about America's war literature though not because the writers are left-liberals. It is not that I resist the writer's lyric voice, the personal statement made in the face of the cruel destinies of war. Nobody who has waited for the return of the mission or seen an airplane fall or waited helplessly by while the medics go into the airplane with body-bags would suppress the writer's outcry. For those who have seen it and who also teach cadets, I suppose the question is what the cadets should or might be told and what—in the hope they will never need be told—they had better learn for themselves. For the worst of war, there are no courses of instruction. No, I regret that cause and history have been lost to personal outcry. In the case of John Dos Passos, World War I encompassed more than one man's initiation. Norman Mailer's concern with the ideological arguments of Lt. Hearn and General Cummings tends to overshadow the palpable enormities of the Axis powers. Ernest Hemingway's sense of cause shines more clearly for the Spanish Loyalists than for World War II allies, and even in



*For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Pablo's slaying of the fascists is rendered with more blood-curdling realism than any action of Franco's enemy forces. Never mind nobility or heroism, the very fact of one man's suffering is diminished when its historical context is lost.

But for American writers—unlike their European counterparts—the horrors of war have overwhelmed historical context. Hemingway was right when he said that nobody had touched the objective intensity of Tolstoi in describing the taking of a redoubt. My own literary preference is Andre Malraux. Whether fighting for the Chinese Communists against both Chiang Kai Shek *and* the Comintern in the Shanghai uprising of 1927 or against the Nazis in *The Walnut Trees of Altenburg* or the brilliant passages on war in *Anti-Memoirs*, Malraux integrates historical experience and personal condition—what, in my opinion, novelists are supposed to do. Art historian, writer, explorer, political activist, DeGaulle's minister of culture, soldier—the famous Col. Berger of the French Resistance, Malraux never wrote a novel in which war was merely a personal occasion; in his works, the larger issues are there to give meaning to the most horrible of personal experiences.

And so, the professional military can simply dismiss what our novelists have written about it. James Gould Cozzens did exactly that. He was quoted as having said that Ernest Hemingway could write for Little Folks magazine and that Steinbeck's bleeding-heart liberalism made him want to throw up. But much will be lost by casting out American writers as adolescent, self-serving, and wrong-headed. True enough, in the present literary marketplace especially, books abound that emphasize personal adjustment

over historical imperative: how to cope with middle age, how to survive divorce, how to find God and a fortune in real estate on faith and borrowed money. The fact is that books to improve our characters and status are also part of the American literary tradition. As for the present variety of self-help books, one need not contend that money and orgasm are wholly despicable though neither is the pre-eminent human virtue to be found in the sermons of Jonathan Edwards.

The ideological struggle in American literature has never been between what we would think of today as liberal versus conservative but something closer to a conflict between rational liberalism and a constructive radicalism. We are a revolutionary people and American literature is a literature of protest — not only against injustice and inequity but for quite specific qualities in the national life. As early as 1616, writing his *A Description of New England*, John Smith celebrated the positive consequences of responsible, personal freedom. He wrote, "what so truley suites with honour and honestie, as discovering things unknown? erecting townes, peopling Countries, informing the ignorant, reforming things unjust, teaching virtue; and gaine to our Native mother-countrie a kingdom to attend her; find imployment for those that are idle, because they know not what to doe; so far from wronging any as to cause Posteritie to remember thee; and remembering thee, ever honour that remembrance with praise?"

At most, John Smith was a supporting player in that adventurous age. A self-promoter, he might today be the author of that book on how to find God and a fortune on faith and borrowed money. Certainly, his essay contains PR hype because he hoped to

attract other Englishmen to these shores. And it is precisely because John Smith was who and what he was that I've chosen to quote him. John Smith—what a marvelous name for these purposes—out of the English tradition but already speaking like somebody new, eager to do all right by himself, shamelessly parading with a good-looking, soft-walking girl of indigenous origin named Pocahontas, and this same Smith not only a soldier but an officer—Captain John Smith. Is it any wonder this make-out artist got passed over for O-4? But no matter how we characterize him, real estate developer or visionary, in the first book written in English about America, he brought a platform that some of you may recognize: discover things unknown, build the cities, inform the ignorant, find work for the unemployed, reform what is unjust, and wrong no one.

American writers were arguing for that program a century and a half before we fought the war to call ourselves Americans. And our writers have continued to argue for it. Whitman did it in poetic plain talk. Frank Norris and Dreiser did it angrily; Scott Fitzgerald (in *The Great Gatsby*) artfully and sadly. John Steinbeck's thirties novels, *In Dubious Battle* and *The Grapes of Wrath*, help us understand why somebody named Cesar Chavez is an American Revolutionary leader. For those willing and unafraid to understand the hope and anger in the black ghetto, Richard Wright's *Native Son* remains required reading. Their revolutionary spirit *for* has been and must continue to be the enduring theme of American literature.

In Frank O'Connor's prescription, the novel is anchored on the bedrock of historical experience. American writers must understand again that the evocations of sensibility—what in a novel I'm writing

is called psychiatric reality—cannot substitute for historical imperatives. Writers who do not fear Soviet military power or suspect the dense convolutions of the Russian mind need only remind themselves of the plight of their Russian literary brethern—the dissident writers. Solzhenitsyn was reluctant not only to leave Mother Russia but also his fellow dissidents. Once such insights are gained, we shall hardly think of the American military as being suspiciously necessary.

But if the bridges of unification are to be built, the military also has its role to play. It is not enough to be against the monolithic, boorish, and reactionary Soviet Union. To the extent that the military impresses the American public as self-serving, as forgetful of our own revolutionary idealism, as enamored of costly technologies for their own sake, as self-defensive first and nationally protective second, we shall be wary and suspicious when we are told of military needs. Unfair as it may be to him, young America is probably more aware of Curtis LeMay as George Wallace's vice-presidential candidate than of LeMay's leadership role in SAC. American armed forces defend a revolutionary government—the best, most authentic, and humane of revolutionary governments; *revolution* is our word, and we should surrender it to the forces of oppression no more readily than we should surrender peoples or land.

In conclusion, let me say that I have lived and worked easily here at the Academy, that I have felt deep-down comfortable and at home. Furthermore, I have discovered that the military people who disagree with me are apt to disagree only in degree and not in kind. But what we are calling “perceptions” can be powerfully destructive. Our first line of defense is

idea itself — what we are *for* — and that seems to have been lost or sullied in all of our institutions. If we can find that again — in story, myth, and fact — the burden of mutual understanding will be easy enough to bear.

*Alfred Kern*

## HUMANITIES AT THE HANOI HILTON

**T**ALKING ABOUT THE HUMANITIES is modishly in, acceptable gossip at academic cocktail parties and in board rooms, presently on a par with whispered anecdotes about last season's movie celebrity. "Oh, my dears, have you heard what's happened to the Humanities? Well, freshen your drink and pull up a chair and let me tell you the latest. I saw them yesterday. Yes, all of them. I was shopping at Bloomingdale's — no, they weren't *in* the store. On the sidewalk. Staring in the window. And they looked dreadful. Poor and shabby. And ill. They weren't even talking to each other. The Humanities are down and out, quite down and out. Isn't it marvelously awful? What did I do? Just walked right past them. I mean it was terribly embarrassing. But you do remember how they used to lord it over the rest of us? Practically came right out and said we were hopelessly uncultured and stupid. Just talked about themselves at parties. If you ask me, the Humanities have gotten what they deserve."

---

Reprinted from *Literature in the Education of the Military Professional*, a publication of the US Air Force Academy, 1982.

And — yes — a bit of that chortling does go happily about, particularly among those who thought they had been snubbed as, alas, they often were. Indeed, even those who qualified for membership were sometimes scorned. It was at the University of Virginia, location of Jefferson's American dream, that T. S. Eliot asserted with the dumb confidence of French prime minister Barre that no Jew would ever write a major American novel, an assertion that may have inspired Irwin Edman's couplet about Eliot's arriving in London "to give his thanks/at one old church and two old banks." Unfortunately, that cocktail shrew I was imitating has a point. Secure and remote in their counting houses, tracking the droplets of contrapuntal water imagery in poems where fires flame and water freezes, served weak tea by obsequious acolytes, the humanists were often so self-absorbed in the Humanities that mere towering humanness got overlooked.

And so, as you see, I've my own spleen to vent. Suffice it to say that if Watergate required us to make distinctions between some lawyers and the law, if medical malpractice requires us to make similar distinctions between some doctors and medicine, and if — belatedly — we are apprehensive about some scientists whose curiosities go unattended by moral imagination, so, too, must we be willing to distinguish the Humanities from some of the licensed humanists. I speak for the Humanities, not the practitioners even if I am one of them.

The fact is that in the past ten years, I've enjoyed intellectual discourse more passionately and soberly in the Corner Bistro on West Fourth Street in Manhattan; there, argument and discussion occur without being strangled by institutional politics, the

size of staffs, the last promotion list, the number of department majors, culture justified by course enrollments, the tenure crunch, and yes—whether those at table reflect the proportions set by affirmative action guidelines. At the bistro, ironically, the mix of race and gender usually is legal although the only price of admission is to know what you're talking about. The American academic community—what Jacques Barzun called *The House of Intellect*—has not in recent years been the best place to live for intellectuals. The house of intellect needs work, both restoration and remodeling.

The Humanities are also in the news, moving toward the obituary columns. *Newsweek* carried a page and a half under the headline: "The Humanities Crisis." The Rockefeller Foundation report, *The Humanities in American Life*, has recently been published by the University of California Press—192 pages, price \$12.50. I have not been inspired to read this decennial tome of self-pity (usually a complaint that the National Science Foundation receives an unfair share of the money), but *Newsweek* declares that the report is critical of the "back to basics" movements, arguing that when minimum standards of competence are imposed, reading and writing tend to become "instruments of survival, not skills for pleasure and learning."

In the first place, I very much doubt that minimum competence is an instrument of survival. Semi-literacy and an ignorance of Western civilization may allow for some measure of success in the American marketplace, but finally it will doom the country and the marketplace itself. Of course, every teacher hopes his students will achieve those skills which bring pleasure to learning. What we need to



understand, however, is that far beyond rudimentary skills and at the highest levels of competence, the Humanities *are* the instruments of survival. Our scientific colleagues, the quantum physicists particularly, may grasp this reality more readily than the humanists themselves.

Not mere enrichment or pleasure, the Humanities are both intention and the strategies of intention—the instruments of survival. While teaching at the United States Air Force Academy two years ago, I met and heard former American prisoners of war, and I am going to use some of their stories to illustrate the point. If our political and military policies in Vietnam should be argued, what I tell you here has only to do with these prisoners—not the politics of the war. No matter what you think about Vietnam, I ask you now to think only about the POWs. These American men, the POWs, mostly fliers though not unlike ourselves, were kept so long and suffered so cruelly that their experience escaped the war, became about itself, an experience not unlike the Holocaust in its enormities; i.e., too stark and brutal for historical and artistic transformation. Their insistence upon survival, their clinging to humanness and the Divine years after they had reason to cling to either, has separated them from us, or so it should have separated them from us. The American POWs should belong now to some strange and evil Asian cult where torture merged into everydayness, a cult so alien to the American experience that they should be lost not only to us but their own repatriated selves. And yet, if they are different by the intimacy of their awful knowledge, the wonder is how intensely they belong.

Dave Burroughs, a former fighter pilot, now works to coordinate some social service agencies in a small Arizona town. Burroughs is a tall and gaunt man, the lines on his face a thousand years older than his features. As we talked in my office, I was astonished to learn that he is nearly ten years younger than I. I asked Colonel Burroughs if he was acquainted with the Academy's survival training, a program of simulation that prepares the cadets for their own possible capture. He nodded. "There's no way to simulate it. There's no preparation for jail. Or torture." He talked slowly, almost as if what he was about to say might embarrass me. "The so-called corny stuff," he said. I raised my eyebrows. "I found myself praying," he said, "and you think about home." Then: "Best training for it is the Humanities. Not the pretend POW camp. Books. Plays. Poems. Philosophy. The big ideas. The persistence of values. The real lifesaving stuff."

As you may have read, many of those captured remained in prison for five to nearly eight years with about half that time in solitary confinement. Forbidden to communicate, tortured for attempting to do so, they used a simple but laborious method to reach each other. They reduced the alphabet to twenty-five letters, the letter "k" being omitted and substituted for by another letter. The letters were arranged in a five-by-five square so that the first taps indicated the location of the line and the second taps specified the letter. One of the POWs, Colonel John Reynolds, ordered his men to tap out whatever they knew about history. Day by day and month by month, as they could, painstakingly, they did so, and Reynolds somehow contrived to write it down. Starved, injured, ill and beaten, they wrote their own history,

made their own book to recreate a human past, their work on that book being less psychotherapy or a responsible commander's way to maintain military morale than the need to create the book—such need both felt and known, an act to transform and mitigate the absurd brutality of their condition. That manuscript exists in the Pentagon archives, and I intend to find a way to read it. I have a hunch that this history, written in solitude and pain and deprivation, exalts and celebrates the human possibility.

Yet another ex-POW, Jeremiah Denton, is now the right-wing candidate for the Senate from Alabama. I'm sorry to say that I wouldn't vote for him, but I do recommend his book. (And yet I am not sorry to report that since this essay was written, Admiral Denton won election to the Senate.) Denton was the POW compelled to participate in the television interview from Hanoi. While he was saying whatever he was being forced to say, he blinked his eyes in Morse code to spell out t-o-r-t-u-r-e. As a prisoner, Jeremiah Denton wrote poetry for his fellow prisoners—Christmas and Easter poems. The poems may not be good poetry, but one of them—for contrast—sent me back to Yeat's "The Second Coming." The lines I sought seemed to characterize the national psyche during the worst of the Vietnam years. "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold/Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world/The blood-dimmed time is loosed, and everywhere/The ceremony of innocence is drowned/The best lack all conviction, while the worst/Are full of passionate intensity." You see, what impresses me about the POWs, Jeremiah Denton's struggle to make poetry stretched across the rack, is their will to hold the center. Fliers, engineers, technologists, broken in body with numbers soon to

die, they used the Humanities—twenty centuries of mind and spirit and will—to live.

What we learn from the POWs, a message they have spoken to us in the clearest of simple language, is both the reason and the way; the solutions in which the medicines are suspended *are* the medicines. To the authors of the Rockefeller report, I say, "Yes, you can bet your next NEH grant that the Humanities are the instruments of survival." And at the Hanoi Hilton, survival meant to survive, to live and not to die.

For somebody of my generation, the signs are bad—not only in the Middle East but also in Europe: terrorist murder at the Munich Oktoberfest, kneecaps shot off in Italy, France a seeming haven to world terrorists and indifferent to the Neo-Nazi street gangs determined to kill Jews. Oil may be more valuable than lives, and America has yet to show its ability to put an act together. Meanwhile, even as attention is being paid, the humanities continue to gather dust in university committee rooms. In American colleges and universities, irrespective of department or course, every subject is about the humanities—or so, certainly, they should be.

In "The World of Epictetus," Vice Admiral James Bond Stockdale, perhaps the most articulate of the former POWs, writes: "For me, the golden doors were labeled history and the classics. The historical perspective which enabled a man to take himself away from all the agitation, not necessarily to see a rosy lining, but to see the real nature of the situation he faced, was truly a thing of value. . . . Education in the classics teaches you that all organizations since the beginning of time have used the power of guilt; that cycles are repetitive; and that this is the way of the

world. . . . And I believe a good classical education and an understanding of history can best determine the rules you should live by."

The humanities are too precious to be wasted in intramural committee meetings, much too precious to be kept only by college professors; we do not consider ourselves to be scholar-monks guarding the manuscripts while we pray for the next enlightenment. What I learned anew from the POWs is that the humanistic tradition is both the milk and the honey. They prove the great notion: that what must be saved is also what will save us. Otherwise, Yeat's great beast, stirring in the desert—the desert, how prophetic!—will do more than slouch toward Bethlehem. It will arrive and devour.

*James B. Stockdale*

## EDUCATION FOR LEADERSHIP AND SURVIVAL: THE ROLE OF THE PRESSURE COOKER

**T**AKEN GENERALLY, my subject—Education for Leadership and Survival—falls easily within the comprehensive category of citizenship and moral obligation. My subtitle—The Role of the Pressure Cooker—projects an angle of vision that is scarcely less universal. Though it subtends a very personal arc, it points back to the Christian and classical past. I am all for the idea of progress, but I believe that all progress is stimulated by an awareness of a heritage. “It is the future that we are more like to think of immediately when the idea of progress is brought up,” says Robert Nisbet, “but it was only when men became conscious of a long past . . . that a consciousness of progressive movement from past to present became possible.” (*History of the Idea of Progress*, New York, 1980, p. 323.)

Let me start with the over-obvious, boxed in a cliché, wrapped in some truisms. The concept of citizenship is one of the fundamental ideas of Western

---

Admiral Stockdale delivered this Andrew R. Cecil Lecture on Moral Values in a Free Society in 1981. Reprinted with permission from *The Ethics of Citizenship*, a University of Texas at Dallas publication.

civilization. It is an idea born with the Greeks more than 2,500 years ago. It is an idea fundamental to the American republic. It is an idea historically linked to two others: freedom and organization. At its highest, citizenship achieves a balance between these two elements necessary to the survival of society. At its best, citizenship finds an equilibrium between two essential ingredients—that of rights, and that of duties. When the idea of citizenship is losing its grip, one or the other of these elements becomes eroded. Either freedom is on the losing end, or the sense of duty, of obligation, goes down the drain. We are living at a time when the idea of citizenship has been seriously weakened. We have a strong sense of the rights of a citizen. But we've lost much of the sense of the corresponding duties and obligations of citizenship. Meanwhile, the State behaves in a paradoxical manner. We find ourselves in what the philosophers call a dialectical situation. Responding to popular demand for freedom and equality, the bureaucracy of the State, swollen to the proportions of a Titan, enacts battery after battery of laws and regulations to ensure that freedom and equality. Result: the State's liberty is impaired as is that of its citizens. Like a giant Gulliver the State lies on the ground, struggling to move against the bonds of the very measures it has taken to ensure freedom and equality. For "Freedom and equality are sworn enemies," say the Durants in their little book *The Lessons of History*, "and when one prevails the other dies." (New York, 1968, p. 20.) This is a hard saying. I will let you decide what measure of truth it has.

One of the primary duties of citizenship is its duty to education. By education I don't mean just schooling. The idea of education is broader than that,

important though schooling is. Schooling is a necessary element of education, but not sufficient completely to define it.

Marriage and family life are education. Sport, play, and entertainment are education. Religious training is education. Friendship is education. Military service is education. Any and every encounter with nature and society is education. Some social scientists call education in this comprehensive sense "acculturation." I prefer to call it more simply—"experience."

Now there is an element in education that I consider of crucial importance. There are learned names for the many varieties of this element, and some of these we might talk about as we go on. But for the moment I'll use the word "stress." Another name for it is "pressure." Stress or pressure in education and in life has had bad reviews. I want to give it a good one. Doctors used to say stress was bad for you—one of the evils of competitive society—and should be avoided. Nowadays some doctors say a moderate amount of stress is good for you, particularly the kind that comes from physical exercise. And there's a whole school of Running Doctors like George Sheehan who get a kind of mystical experience from running a marathon and write books about it. (Cf. Sheehan, *Running and Being*, New York, 1978.) But all doctors say if you're planning to get into this, get a stress test first.

Stress is essential to leadership. Living with stress, knowing how to handle pressure, is necessary for survival. It is related to a man's ability to wrest control of his own destiny from the circumstances that surround him. Or, if you like, to prevail over technology. Tied up with this ability is something I



can express in one word, "improvisation." I mean man's ability to prepare a response to a situation while under pressure.

George Bernard Shaw said that most people who fail complain that they are the victims of circumstances. Those who get on in this world, he said, are those who go out and look for the right circumstances. And if they can't find them they make their own.

To wrest or not to wrest control of one's destiny is a subject discussed by Will and Ariel Durant in that little book I mentioned. In the chapter of their *Lessons in History* called "Growth and Decay," they state that what determines whether the challenge of history will or will not be met depends upon "the presence or absence of creative individuals with a clarity of mind and energy of will (almost a definition of genius), capable of effective responses to new situations (almost a definition of intelligence)." I think the Durants' creative individual with energy of will, capable of effective responses to new situations, is the man I describe as one who can improvise under pressure.

My pitch is that if the energy of will and creativity necessary to improvise under pressure can be taught, they are best learned in a stressful regime—in a crucible of pressure, whether that crucible be a classroom or a total environment.

I suppose my coming down on the side of stress is no surprise to this audience. My life has been that of a military man, and pressure has been my constant companion. I began with a service academy education back in the time when every teacher had to register a grade for every student at every class meeting. That may not have been the best of all educational systems,

but it was a stressful one. Afterward, I lived in stress for thirty years, as a fighter pilot, experimental test pilot, and prisoner of war. My last Navy assignment was the presidency of the Naval War College, where I taught a course "Foundations of Moral Obligation." Later I became president of a college which has for one hundred forty years educated young men in a stressful regime—The Citadel.

My lifetime of experience in the pressure cooker, whether hemmed in by the iron laws of aerodynamics at 40,000 feet or on the flight test ranges over the Mojave Desert, or hemmed in by the iron laws of extortion in the prisons of Hanoi, has led me to conclude that once one learns to accommodate the shocks of a stressful existence, his adrenalin, will power, and imagination are going to start churning to provide the maximum performance of the human mind. The generation I taught at test pilot school at the Naval Air Test Center at Patuxent River, Maryland (John Glenn was one of my classmates), could have stepped right out of the pages of Tom Wolfe's recent book, *The Right Stuff*. In those days of the early 1950s, the exciting subject was supersonic flight. I taught an academic course in thrust and drag in the high subsonic and lower supersonic flight regimes, and I can honestly say that the intellectual mastery of the graphs and the physical laws behind them were more efficiently taught to my students in the stress of actual flight in a cockpit at 40,000 feet than in the classroom. By saying that, I am not just referring to the differences between the classroom and the lab, but rather to the more mentally stimulating of the two environments.

But I don't want you to think that I am holding up my experiences under stress as a simple model of

education for excellence and survival. I'll tell you more about those experiences in a moment, but first I want to broaden the screen a bit lest you think stress and pressure are tied in a beneficial way to one way of life alone, however important they may have been in that life, which happened to be the life of a military man subjected perhaps to more direct and dire pressures than most. I want you to see with me that our whole culture, even what we call Western civilization itself, is founded on the sufferings and greatness of human beings and human societies under pressure.

It is a commonplace to say that our moral heritage has two sources—Judaic and Greek. The source book of the one is the Bible and the tradition of Judeo-Christianity associated with it. The origins of the other lie in the library of poetry, drama, politics, and philosophy of the Greek writers whose works have come down to us. If you are going to talk about justice, you had better begin with Job and Socrates.

If ever a man was in a pressure situation, it is Job, the man from the land of Uz. He is a man, once prosperous and happy, who has been struck by terrible misfortune. He has at a stroke lost sons and daughters, servants and possessions. He has been infected with a loathsome disease. Once a rich man, now he sits on an ash heap, naked, scraping his flesh with potsherds. He asks, "Why me, O Lord?" For he believes that the Almighty has caused or allowed these calamities to come upon him, and it makes no sense. He, Job, is a good man, a just man. What has he done to deserve this evil? Job wants to talk to God about this. Is He not a just God?

Now, as we know, God does not answer Job in the terms he would like. God does not acknowledge

Job's virtue nor does He admit the situation is unfair. Instead, clothed in a whirlwind. He points to the awesome dimensions of the universe and asks Job if he, finite creature, could do anything like that. Can Job create the sea, guide the courses of the stars? Where was Job when God created heaven and earth?

In answer, Job is silent. He bows and puts his hand over his mouth. His silence is the silence of faith, of endurance. Job was put under stress greater than nearly any man could take, and he stood the test.

Theologians have found many exalted lessons in the story of Job. One of them is that we should not try to measure the standards of the infinite with those of the finite—they are incommensurable. The lesson I take from Job is simpler. Life is not fair. There is no moral economy or balance in the nature of things such that virtue is rewarded and vice punished. The good man hangs on and hangs in there. It is significant that the nearest Plato comes to a definition of courage in the dialogue *Laches* where Socrates is talking to a general under whom he served is "Courage is endurance of the soul." The Greeks admired the bold stroke, the audacious dash, but reserved top credit for the man that holds on under pressure. They knew by bitter experience what stress situations are. They knew what it means to break under pressure and what it means to hold on. On the battlefield, says Aristotle, the greatest pressure is fear of death, and the temptation is to run away. But the courageous man holds on.

Plato's dialogues' most compelling portraits of Socrates show his master handling himself under supreme stress. Defending himself on a capital charge

in court before hostile judges, he resists their pressure to get himself off the hook by agreeing to renounce teaching and inquiry. In prison, he resists pressure to escape laid on him by his rich pupil Crito who had the means and the bribe money. (Athenians, "children of the laws," were not to be disillusioned by his failure to abide by the state's verdict, even though unjust.) With death only hours away he has the equanimity to advise his family and to discourse to his pupils on the Soul—on the reasons why a good man should not fear death. (*Apology* 29–30; *Crito* 50–151; *Phaedo* 67–68.)

The Greek city-state itself was a bit like a pressure cooker. It was small, and life was pretty constricted within it. The pressure set up jealousies and envies, both internal and external; this was one reason why these political entities were always fighting with one another and exiling or deposing their own leaders. The Greek city-state was always in danger of being attacked by its neighbor. This was why military training was so much a part of the Greek citizen's life. It is true that some city-states at certain times used mercenaries or hired armies. But in general the latter were considered inferior and untrustworthy when the going got tough. The citizen army was at the heart of Greek city-state defense. Socrates did his military service in the Peloponnesian War, saw action at Potidaea and the siege of Delium, and passed up a decoration for valor so that another man might have it.

Education in ancient Greece came down hard on physical training. This training had an esthetic purpose. A body in good shape was fair to look upon. More than that, Greek gymnastics aimed at victory—victory in war and in the competitive games of

peace. Greek gymnastic exercise was advantageous for military proficiency. One of the famous Spartan exercises was dancing—in heavy armor. This helped to develop the agility a man needed to wield his offensive weapons, the spear and short sword; it also developed the finesse to sidestep the thrusts of his enemy. The philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, while teaching at Harvard, said that if Plato were to come to our country today, he would first ask to meet, not a philosopher, but a championship-class boxer.

In times of peace—and there were few—there were the competitions among the city-states. The Olympic games, though only one of several periodic competitions, were the most famous of these contests. In fact, these games were so important to the Greeks that they suspended hostilities, if at war, for the duration. Today some educators talk about the evil effects of competition instilled into our children, of the need to avoid developing a competitive spirit in our youth. But the Greeks, whose humanism these same experts profess to admire, were the most competitive people that ever lived. They wanted to excel in everything. Their motto was *ai en aristeuein*, “always to be the best.” Their public games included competition not only in racing, jumping, javelin throwing, boxing, and wrestling, but also in musical, poetic, literary, and drama contests. In one of the best known and most fun-filled dialogues of Plato, *The Symposium*, the party scene is the celebration of the prize the host Agathon had just won for writing the best tragedy. To the Greeks the heart of the game was *agon*—competition, stress, pressure, struggle to win. (Later we’ll see a contemporary scholar’s comment on *agon* in education.) They like to point out

that the philosopher Heraclitus, to them already an ancient and legendary figure, had claimed that both music and science had their beginning in stress—the world itself composed of opposite forces, tensions pulling against each other, like the strain of a drawn bow, resulting in a comparative stability or permanence—as the strings of a lyre give forth harmony when they are pulled two ways, stretched in harmonic proportions over the sounding board of the instrument by the pegs and the tailboard fastenings. The beautiful repose of the Greek temple was seen by the intelligentsia as the product of perfectly calculated architectural stress.

Far more ancient than the dialogues of Plato or even the philosophy of Heraclitus is Homer's great story of Odysseus, soldier and navigator. In the *Odyssey* we read of his long captivity under Calypso and his twelve-year voyage, fraught with a score of deadly perils, from that rocky island where he was held enslaved, to Ithaca, where his faithful wife Penelope and his son Telemachus were waiting for him. We all know Homer's trick of tagging things, men and gods, with a characteristic label. It is always the wine-dark sea, always the grey-eyed Athena, always the rosy-fingered dawn. Odysseus' characteristic trait is resourcefulness, the ability to improvise in a pressure situation. *Polumetis*, Homer calls him, full of survival tricks, never at a loss no matter how lethal the situation may be. A familiar episode in the story illustrates Odysseus' resourcefulness under stress. Held captive by the one-eyed giant Polyphemus, in his narrow cave, Odysseus knows that he and his men are doomed to a horrible death. (That's a fair amount of pressure. Doctor Johnson told Boswell that when a man knows he's going to be hanged in a month, it concentrates his

mind wonderfully.) Odysseus had only a couple of days. He waited until the giant was in a drunken sleep, then took a stake he had hidden in straw, heated it and plunged it into his captor's one eye, blinding him so that the Trojan war veteran and what was left of his crew could escape. Odysseus, the resourceful, kept his head; he had the ability to improvise under pressure.

A more profoundly moving story lies at the base and heart of Christianity itself—the death of Jesus on the Cross. By comparison, Socrates' death was merciful and dignified. Death by crucifixion was very cruel. Reserved for slaves and the most ignominious of criminals, this mode of execution killed by weakening the chest muscles by the downward drag of the body so that life was slowly extinguished by gradual and painful suffocation. What the stress was upon that man who hung there is hard for us to imagine—maybe not quite so hard for those of us who have experienced physical torture. The Gospel story tells us that despite the pressure to defend Himself at His trial, Jesus did not do so. On the cross, He kept silent in the face of his tormentors' jokes. He did cry out, "I thirst," and, when the anguish became more than a man could bear, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" But at the end He said as one would speak of a duty discharged, a mission completed, "It is finished."

Ernest Hemingway, hardly a model Christian, wrote a story called "Good Friday." It is a story about the aftermath of Calvary. Some Roman soldiers who were in charge of the execution are drinking and talking of the events of the day. They are pretty drunk. One soldier can only mumble over and over, "I tell you, He looked pretty good in there today." No



accident that Hemingway's moral ideal was "grace under pressure." He tried to see that his heroes measured up to it.

In the Christian Middle Ages, especially as they were drawing to their close, alchemy was all the rage among a certain class of learned men. Alchemy was based on the old idea of the *hermetic* that had come down from ancient Greece and Egypt and had been colored by Christian sacramental teaching. The idea of the hermetic was two-fold. It meant something sealed off—hermetically sealed, as we say. And it also meant magic—particularly magical transformation. You put something in a crucible or a retort and you subjected it to certain pressures like heat, or doses of sulphur and mercury. If you were lucky or wise or both, some kind of creative transformation would take place. In physical terms, this referred to the changing of base metals into precious ones—lead into gold. But the top grade alchemical philosophers were not content with mere physical crucibles and crystal retorts you could hold in your hand. They were aiming at even more important things. Paracelsus thought it might be possible to create a human being (*homunculus*) in the laboratory—something today people are again getting uneasy about. The higher alchemy aimed not at mere physical change but at moral and spiritual transformation. The crucible and retort became symbols of creative growth. Fire and the twin elements sulfur and mercury came to represent the outside pressures exerted upon the human soul in its confined place. In extreme cases, the fire might be of hellish origin. But if the soul in question were strong enough, inventive enough, not mere passive matter, that spirit might undergo an alchemical change—a metamorphosis of the spirit in which the ordinary

stuff of humanity could turn into something precious, emerging as if from a tightly sealed cocoon.

This alchemy comparison may seem farfetched, but I find it not a bad fit with the experience several of us Americans had as long-term prisoners of the North Vietnamese in the dungeons of Hanoi. (I personally was there for nearly eight years, more than half of that time under the extreme discipline of torture and solitary confinement.) I think I know now what the old alchemists meant when they said that sometimes it took a little hellfire to effect the magical transformation in the crucible. A prison is the most merciless case of sealing off a human soul in a confined space. For most people it is a degrading experience. It was for me too, but something more. In that tiny space of confinement, sealed off not only from the rest of the world but even from my fellow prisoners and comrades, I had an humble experience of moral and spiritual enlightenment. Although I am no match for certain great men of history, I find I had precedent and noble company.

The prison where Socrates awaited execution in Athens in the year 399 B.C. was not a marble columned palace as some of the Italian Renaissance masters painted it. Probably it was no more than a fair-sized cave in a hillside with iron bars across the opening. Here Socrates gave his last discourse to his students, many of whom wept, Plato tells us, as they listened to the master's words. He told them that we should not fear death, for death is the liberation of the soul from the body. During life, the soul lives in the body as if it were a prisoner, a caged bird. With death, the prison door is opened, the bird is set free. Socrates quotes a line from the old Orphic priests who said that the body is a tomb of the soul, the place of

corruption. But the place of corruption is also the place of rebirth, of resurrection, freeing the spirit to take its rightful place in the divine realm from which it came. So the wise man does not fear death. It is not an evil. No harm can befall a good man.

In Italy, in the early centuries of Christian Rome, a man named Boethius was imprisoned by his emperor Theodoric the Ostrogoth. He was executed on a charge of treason in the year 524 A.D. This man Boethius was both a statesman and a scholar. He had been prime minister to the emperor. His scholarly works would have an immense influence on subsequent medieval philosophy. His commentaries on Aristotle's logic became standard texts in the universities. According to Boethius' written description of his imprisonment, he sits there in captivity lamenting his misfortune, the loss of his honors and riches, the confiscation of his library with bookshelves of glass and ivory. Suddenly a beautiful lady appears to him. She is Lady Philosophy. She comforts him by telling him many things. That the world is governed by divine wisdom, not by blind chance. That we must not give too much importance to Fortune, for she is a fickle lady, taking away with one hand what she has given with the other. We must not become upset when she takes good things away from us. They were never ours to begin with. True happiness does not come from externals, she reminds him, but from within. True, life with its sudden falls of fortune is no easy thing. But would a good soldier fighting a tough battle stop to say to himself how unhappy he is? A wise man like Boethius ought not to bewail his struggles with fortune any more than a brave soldier should be scared by the noises of battle. Lady Philosophy reminds the prisoner of the wisdom of Socrates—that no evil can befall a good man.

Boethius wrote his book while in prison. It was published after his death, and became one of the great Christian classics—*The Consolation of Philosophy*.

About 400 years ago a Spanish officer lay in prison, a captive of the Moors of Algeria. He was a veteran of the battle of Lepanto, the last great naval fight in which ships were powered by oars. The Turks had been encroaching on the Mediterranean with the aim of seizing Cyprus from Venice. But Don John of Austria, leading the ships of Spain and the Venetian Republic, destroyed the Turkish fleet in a fierce engagement from which this Spanish officer emerged a cripple. He got no glory out of it for he was soon captured by Algerian pirates and held captive for five years with several of his comrades. At first he was profoundly depressed in his captivity, but gradually discovered in himself the power of leadership, the ability to organize and to direct men. He kept his comrades busy with tasks that took their minds off their sorry condition. He organized six elaborate escape attempts, all of which failed. At last he was released and returned to his native land of Spain where he expected the king to recognize his services. But the king and people were tired of wars and battles; they wanted to hear no more about it. Embittered, the officer withdrew to his home and began to scribble a comic story about a witless Don who fancied himself a knight errant of old and rode all over Spain seeking to conquer giants and rescue damsels in distress. The story grew under the fingers of his one good hand, and at last it was published under the title *Don Quixote*. The officer's name was Miguel de Cervantes.

The Stoic philosopher Epictetus was foremost among my consolations of philosophy in the pressure cooker of Hanoi. Like Cervantes he was a cripple. Unlike the author of *Don Quixote*, he was a slave. At least, he had been a slave until a generous master set him free so that he could teach philosophy in ancient Rome. How I got to know Epictetus I explained in a letter I wrote in 1975 to Joseph Brennan, then Professor of Philosophy, Barnard College, Columbia University, who had written to me asking about the comfort and strength philosophical readings had given me throughout my eight years in prison. I expanded these thoughts and added to them later in an article I wrote for *The Atlantic Monthly* titled "The World of Epictetus" (April 1978). For what follows I'll draw on the letter. (The full text is in J.G. Brennan, *The Education of a Prejudiced Man*, New York, 1977. See also his "Hermetically Sealed" in *Perspectives and Personalities, Essays in Honor of Claude Hill*, Heidelberg, 1978.)

I came into the Navy as a Naval Academy Midshipman in 1943 at the age of 19. For the next twenty years or so I was a rather technically oriented person. I was a seagoing destroyer officer, an aviator, a landing signal officer, a test pilot and academic instructor at the test pilot school, a many-times-deployed fighter pilot, and ultimately a Squadron Commander of a supersonic F-8 Crusader outfit.

In 1960 I was sent to Stanford University for two full years' study in politics/history/economics in preparation for later assignments in politico-military policymaking. I loved the subject matter, but noticed that in many courses my interest would peak at about the time the professor would say, "We're getting into philosophy — let's get back to the subject." I had more

than adequate time to get the expected Master's Degree, and suggested to my advisor in my second year that I sign up for some courses over in the philosophy corner of the quadrangle. He was dead set against it—thought it would be a waste of my time. He said, "That's a very technical subject—it would take two terms to learn their peculiar vocabulary." Finally, after I persisted, he said, "It's up to you."

It was my good fortune on that first morning that I wandered through the halls of the Philosophy Department, grey-haired and in civilian clothes, to come by an open office whose occupant asked if he could be of help. When I told him that I was a graduate student technically in the humanities but with no formal philosophy background, he could scarcely believe it. When I told him I was a naval officer, he asked me to have a seat. He had been in the Navy in World War II. His name was Philip Rhinelander. As a Harvard lawyer he had practiced in Boston for several years before Pearl Harbor, volunteered for war service at sea, and thereafter took his PhD at Harvard. After tours as a dean at Harvard he was back in the classroom at his own request. He was in the midst of his two-term "personal" course: "The Problems of Good and Evil." This he had built upon the lessons of the Book of Job ("Life is not fair"). He offered to let me enter the course, and to overcome my shortcomings of background, to give me an hour of private tutoring each week. What a departure from other departments! (In some, PhD candidates sat outside their advisor's office for hours on end awaiting a ten-minute conversation.) I loved Rhinelander's class, and particularly our hour together each week. I remember how patient he was in trying to get me to realize the full implications of Hume's "Dialogues on Natural Religion."

As we parted after our last session, he reached up to his bookshelf and said something like, "As I remember it, you are a military man—take this booklet as a memento of our hours together. It provides moral philosophy applicable to your profession." It was Epictetus' *Enchiridion*.

That night I started to peruse my gift. I recognized nothing that applied to the career I had known. I was a fighter pilot, an organizer, a motivator of young aviators, a martini drinker, a golf player, a technologist—and this ancient rag talked about not concerning oneself with matters over which one had no control, etc. Charitably put, I thought it irrelevant. Nevertheless I read and remembered almost all of it—if for no other reason than that it was given to me by a man I respected as a human being, a scholar, and a teacher.

About three years after I had said good-bye to Rhineland, while in the midst of my second combat tour against North Vietnam as a Wing Commander, I pulled off a target one September morning in the midst of heavy flak when all the lights came on (fire warning, hydraulic failure, electrical failure, etc.). As I sped over the treetops it became immediately apparent that I had lost my flight controls—by reflex action I pulled the curtain and ejected—and was almost immediately suspended in the air 200 feet above a village street, in total silence except for rifle shots and the whir of bullets past my ear. So help me, in those fleeting seconds before I landed among the waiting crowd I had two vivid thoughts: (1) Five years to wait (I had studied enough modern Far East history and talked to enough Forward Air Controllers in the south to appreciate fully the dilemma of Vietnam—I turned out to be an optimist by two and one-

half years), and (2) I am leaving that technological world and entering the world of Epictetus.

The world view of the Stoics, Professor Rhinelandt had joked, was that their environment was a buzz saw in which human *will* was the only salvation. I was to spend over four years combating a veritable buzz saw (until the torture and extortion machine was set in idle in the late autumn of 1969) and over three more years of simple deprived detention of the sort one would expect in a primitive hostile country. All told, four years were to be spent in solitary confinement, nearly half of it in leg irons. Throughout, until 1970, every effort was to be made to break my will, to make me a cat's paw in propaganda schemes. Real or fabricated "violations of the established regulations for criminals' detention" (e.g., tapping on the walls to another prisoner) would result in torture, with the end aim of sequential (1) confession of guilt, (2) begging for forgiveness, (3) apology, and (4) atonement (signing an antiwar statement). A similar sequence would be set up with *particular* gusto if I were found to be exercising leadership of others via the tap code ("inciting other criminals to oppose the camp authority").

The stress situation was thus framed in the above context. I was crippled (knee broken, partial use of arm), alone, sick (weight down 50 pounds), depressed (not so much from anticipating the next pain as from the prospect of my eventually losing my honor and self-respect), and helpless except for will. What conditions could be more appropriate for Epictetus' admonitions? As a soldier, I had bound myself to a military ethic:



Remember that you are an actor in a drama of such sort as the author chooses—if short, then in a short one: if long, then in a long one. If it be his pleasure that you should enact a poor man, see that you act it well; or a cripple, or a ruler, or a private citizen. For this is your business—to act well the given part; but to choose it belongs to another.

**I was crippled:**

Sickness is an impediment to the body; but not to the will unless itself pleases. Lameness is an impediment to the leg, but not to the will; and say this to yourself with regard to everything that happens. For you will find it to be an impediment to something else, but not truly to yourself.

**I was dependent on my extortionists for life support, and soon learned to ask for nothing to avoid demands for “reciprocity”:**

Whoever then would be free, let him wish nothing, let him decline nothing, which depends on others; else he must necessarily be a slave.

**I could stop misery at any time by becoming a puppet; was it worth the shame?**

If some person had delivered up your body to some passer-by, you would certainly be angry. And do you feel no shame in delivering up your own mind to any reviler, to be disconcerted and confounded?

**Relief from boils, heat, cold, broken bones was “available” for the asking—for a price. What should I say?**

If I can get them with the preservation of my own honor and fidelity and self-respect, show me the way and I will get them; but if you require me to lose my own proper good, that you may gain what is no good, consider how unreasonable and foolish you are. (*Enchiridion*, XVII, IX, XIV, XXVII, XXIV.)

Epictetus was not the only valuable philosophic memory in my predicament: Job (Why me . . . Why *not* me?), Descartes' bifurcation of mind and body, and many other readings were invaluable. Some of my prison mates had deep religious convictions which served them well, some drew resolve from their concepts of political virtue, and so on in a broad spectrum of varying levels of sophistication. I thought of God, and I thought of country too, and that helped. But my "secret weapon" was the security I felt in anchoring my resolve to those selected portions of philosophic thought that emphasized human dignity and self-respect. Imprisonment under dire stress was for me, as it has been for certain others, the crucible in which an ordinary man was made to realize that there was something in him that under pressure could transcend the ordinary. In that hermetic closed space, sealed off from human contact, subjected to pressures of outward forces that reached into the soul, I experienced my own illumination. I would never be the same again. Jack Kerouac, King of the Beats, is not my kind of man, but I am with him when he says "Prison is where you promise yourself the right to live."

Prison is not the only sealed-off place in which development of the spirit under pressure may occur. Any ship is a cutoff world under stress, and it is no accident that our greatest American novel, Melville's *Moby Dick*, rose from the close confinement of its author in a succession of whaling and naval vessels that did not bring him back to these shores for three years. The cockpit of the plane, the command center, the chess board, the sports arena—these and other closed spaces can be the scene of creative transformation of self. In science there is the laboratory,

its test tubes and crucibles; in religion, the ark and the tabernacle. I need not mention that the miraculous development of human life itself takes place in the sealed-off space of the womb.

I am not claiming that we should base education on training people to be in prison, but I am saying that in stress situations, the fundamentals, the hard-core classical subjects, are what serve best. I'm not the only prisoner who discovered that so-called practical academic exercises in "how to do things" were useless in that fix. The classics have a way of saving you the trouble of prolonged experiences. You don't have to go out and buy pop psychology self-help books. When you read the classics in the humanities, you become aware that the big ideas have been around a long time, despite the fact that they are often served up today in modern psychological "explanations" of human action as novel and "scientific." We didn't have to wait for Horney, Erikson, and Maslow to give us the notion of self-fulfillment or self-actualization. They were there in Aristotle's treatises on psychology and ethics all along. Of course, modern psychotherapists have to touch them up a bit to bring them up to date, by injecting a heady dose of personal individualism. This would have puzzled Aristotle. He would not have understood what good it does to discover "the real Me." He thought that self-realization could not be achieved without service to the community, in his case, the city-state. His time was not what Tom Wolfe calls a "Me" generation.

Can we educate for leadership? That's a tough question. It's related to—it's really a part of—a similar question: Can moral values, can moral excellence be taught? There's a great deal of concern about that today. We hear that we must get back to

teaching moral values to the young. But can they be taught? Socrates raised the question in the *Meno*, and declined to give a straight answer. His pitch went something like this. It seems that moral values can't be taught, for if they could, why is it that fine men like Pericles, who have given their children the best home environment and schooling, have no good sons? It seems that "up to the present at least," he said, moral excellence must be considered as something we are endowed with, a gift from the gods, like personal beauty or blue eyes and curly hair. But that "up to the present" is important. Socrates does not close the door entirely on the question. Maybe if we could work out a science of the good, in which a model state based on justice will help us understand how to educate for the good, we might just do it, we might just be able to teach something about moral excellence and make it stick. So Plato follows the *Meno* with the *Republic*, in which he constructs just such a model state in which each is given his or her due. I say "her" advisedly because women as well as men will receive top education in Plato's ideal city-state. And as a military man I'm glad to know that Plato reserves a high status and important function for graduates of his equivalent of West Point and Annapolis.

Aristotle has a lot of common sense to offer on this question of the teaching of moral excellence and leadership. His answer to the question has been taken up into the Western tradition, modified by Locke in the 17th century and by Rousseau in the 18th, then shaped by our own founding fathers, particularly by Thomas Jefferson, author of our Declaration of Independence. We are not born good, but we naturally are adapted to become so. And this adaptation means building of character by habit and training on a basis

of free choice. "Neither by nature nor contrary to nature do the moral excellences arise in us," Aristotle says, "rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and made perfect by habit." (*Nichomachean Ethics*, 1103a 24-26.)

Aristotle was much interested in the role of stress and pressure in life situations, because of his profound concern with the distinction between actions which are performed in force-situations and those freely chosen. There are some actions in which the agent plays no part, he says, and gives the examples of hostages taken prisoner and a man tied up so that he cannot move. A true human act is one in which intention and free choice are present. But he was especially interested in situations in which compulsion and choice can coexist. Even though I may be a prisoner or a hostage, some measure of freedom remains to me. In our situation in Hanoi we were helplessly *confined* and at the mercy of the enemy. Yet a crucial measure of freedom remained to us. We could collaborate with the enemy or could refuse to do so. True, he had the power to make us confess to shameful things by torture. (The method was simple—arms tied behind the back and the rope progressively tightened as blood circulation was stopped until the strongest man would scream in pain like a baby.) But we still had the power to make him begin all over again the next day. Time and again one of our men would come back from interrogation ashamed because he had given up information under torture. By the tap code we'd tell him that we had done that and worse. "There are some instances," says Aristotle, "when a man acts improperly under a strain greater than human nature can bear and which no one could endure." But he adds, "Yet there are perhaps

also acts which no man could possibly be compelled to do, but rather than do them he would accept the most terrible suffering and death." (*Nichomachean Ethics*, III, 1110a 23-28.) In Hanoi I realized that my captors had all the power. I couldn't see how I was going to keep my honor and self-respect intact. The one thing I held on to was my knowing that if you don't give up, compromise, and literally "spill your guts," you can't be had. Compromises pile up when you're in a pressure situation in the hands of a skilled extortionist. You can be had if you make that first compromise, offer to make that "deal," or "meet them half way."

It may seem strange for someone with a deep commitment to the humanities in education to defend the old Plebe Year practices at Annapolis, the U.S. Naval Academy. That's a rough year. The midshipman is studying under great pressure, and he is constantly subjected to personal stresses that some might think of as pointless harassment. But that year of education under stress was of great personal survival value to me. I recall about a month after I was back from Vietnam one of my former prison mates came running to me after a reunion at the Naval Academy. He told me with glee. "This is really great, you won't believe how this country has advanced. They've practically done away with the Plebe Year at the Academy and they've got computers in the basement of Bancroft Hall." I thought, "Hell, if there was anything that helped us get through those eight years it was Plebe Year, and if anything screwed up that war, it was computers."

To me the greatest educational fallacy is that you can get it without stress. The student revolts in the colleges and universities of the 1960s forced faculty

and administrators to back down, to take away requirements, to call off pressures, make things easy. No more required hard science. No more required foreign languages. "Take-home tests" and cozy chats took the place of rigorous final examinations. Students were allowed to take what they wanted. What they wanted was social science, urban development, psychology. What they didn't want was history, mathematics, physics, formal logic, classics, and modern foreign languages. Any reform demanded and secured was always in the direction of easing pressure, lowering standards, diminishing rigor—never increasing it. Result? More than a decade of poorly educated young men and women. In response to the economic pressures of the 1970s, the faculty knuckle-under process has begun to turn around. But it will take a lot of turning before education gets back on the rails.

There is a fascinating essay by Dr. Walter Ong in *Daedalus* magazine, titled "Agonistic Structures in Academia." (*Daedalus*, Fall 1974, No. 4.) His purpose is to offer background material that would help educators analyze the campus struggles of the 1960s. One of the most important factors involved, says Ong, is the disappearance of a stabilizing stressful enmity that for 1,600 years had pitted students against teachers in ceremonial combat. Ong quotes an old German who in the late 1960s was teaching in a public high school in New York. After a trying day in class, he was heard to exclaim, "Ach, these boys want me to be their friend, they should know that the teacher should always be their enemy."

Until recent decades, ceremonial combat in the educational process had been part of Western culture. The student-teacher face-off had been standard since

of this educational operation. Ong says that coeducation was incompatible with any of the elements above. I suppose that might be challenged by some educators today, but I am encouraged when I remember that today most advanced feminists will defend the viability of the single sex college, male or female. Ong's position seems reasonable to me when he argues that the agonistic style took shape in response to uniquely masculine needs.

The agonistic way, including test of manhood, has all but passed from the modern scene. But for what it's worth, as viewed by one who has presided over a single-sex institution where rites of passage are still observed, the self-imposed stress of a structured, disciplined, semi-autonomous student hierarchy yields many good results. Education there becomes an irreversible process which equips its graduates with certain items of what some would call emotional baggage. Picked up along the way are concerns with loyalty, with commitment, a capacity for passion, for idealism. Such a stressful educational environment spurs a growth of conscience and also of salutary egoism.

Jacob Burckhardt, the 19th century Swiss historian, thought well of "that enigmatic mixture of conscience and egoism" he called honor. Although from many standpoints egoism is an impurity, and conscience alone would be nobler, he nevertheless acknowledged the utility and power of the blend. Egoism gives conscience staying power.

"Honor," writes Burckhardt, "is often what remains after faith, love, and hope are lost. (*The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, London, 1929, p. 428.)

From my own experience, I think he's right. A sense of honor under pressure can outlast them all.



the early stages of the Christian era. Saint Augustine described the stand-off methodology in his *Confessions*. Dialectic was the struggle of opposites, and dialectic was the standard method of education in the universities of the high Middle Ages and of the Renaissance.

Dr. Ong describes these agonistic structures as composed of four elements. The first was that of oral disputation. Students recited; they seldom wrote papers. They stood and defended their theses in loud clear voices or they attacked the school solutions. The professor was the sounding board, the sparring partner, and in the end the judge with authority who awarded the palm of praise or delivered the knockout blow. It was a dialectical process of argumentation through opposites, a ritual by which students learned subjects by fighting over them.

A second element was invariably a harsh physical regime. Classes started in darkness at 6 a.m., or before. The rules of behavior were strict. (Has anyone ever seen a schoolmaster portrayed in Renaissance art without his trusty bundle of switches at his side?) A third element of this agonistic structure was the pressure of constant translation; all of this oral disputation was conducted in the tribal language of intellectuals, Latin, the language of doctors and lawyers and metaphysicians. This language requirement in itself imposed a discipline, a structure, and a stressful learning situation. Ong says that the achievement of learning Latin, that tightly disciplined language, well enough to argue in it—indeed to defend one's academic reputation in it—became a sort of puberty rite for the Western-educated male in almost every century of this Christian era, save our own. The fourth element was the all-male character

## **MILITARY ETHICS**

*Reflections on principles—the profession of arms, military leadership, ethical practices, war and morality, educating the citizen-soldier.*

Text and display lines are set in Times. Cover art by Laszlo Bodrogi.  
Editorial Reader: Major Donald Anderson, USAF, National Defense University. Editor: Janis Bren Hietala.

---

**NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY**

**Lieutenant General Bradley C. Hosmer, USAF**  
*President*

**INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL STRATEGIC STUDIES**

**Dr. John E. Endicott**  
*Director*



**NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY PRESS**

**Dr. Frederick Kiley, Director**

**Colonel Robert Kvederas, USA**  
*Associate Director*

**Dr. Joseph E. Goldberg**  
*Professor of Research*

**Lieutenant Colonel Jennings Mace, USAF**  
*Deputy Director*

**George C. Maerz, Senior Editor**

**Dr. Dora Alves, Writer-Editor**  
**Thomas Gill, Writer-Editor**  
**Janis Bren Hietala, Writer-Editor**

**Donald Schmoltdt, Writer-Editor**  
**Edward H. Seneff II, Writer-Editor**

**L. J. Conk, Production Supervisor**

**Pat Williams, Lead Editorial Clerk**  
**Dorothy M. Mack, Editorial Clerk**

**Carol A. Valentine, Editorial Clerk**

**Miles Brewster, Office Manager**

**Rhonda Hawkins, Office Assistant**

---

L.MED  
8